ARGOSY

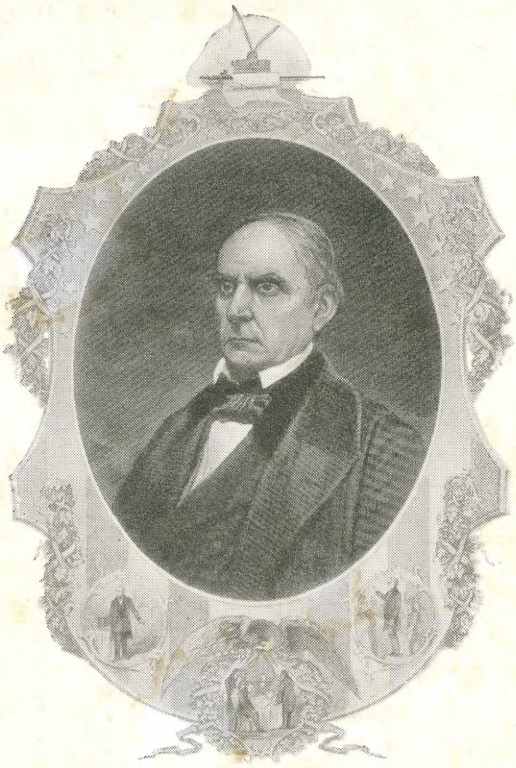
NOVEMBER
25c

BIG CITY BLUES
Book-Length Mystery
by John Wells

THUNDER UNDERFOOT
A Long Novelette By
Walter Duranty and Mary Loos

And Nine Other Stories!

Beginning – **NO LAW NORTH OF 54°**
Novel of the Alaska Purchase
by TOM BLACKBURN



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ARGOSY

Vol. 322 No. 2

THIS copy of ARGOSY comes to you in a new, more compact size. It is part of a limited edition distributed only in carefully selected key localities throughout the country. It has been printed as a further test of a readers' survey which ARGOSY has conducted through the past half year or so—and its purpose is to learn your personal reaction to this new kind of magazine.

Based on the suggestions, requests and expressed preferences of those readers already queried, it is, in effect, something new in American publishing —a magazine created by its readers.

This trial format is, as you will readily see, a practical, magazine modification of the compact, easy-to-handle, time-tested book-size publication. It has been scientifically devised as that medium which will carry the maximum amount of reading matter compatible with easy readability, attractive appearance and good taste. It is a size which, though easier to handle, is yet large enough to allow for generous illustration. It contains, through the addition of thirty-two extra pages, approximately the same editorial content as has been used in our larger, flat-size format. As a happy medium between the too small and the too large magazines, we feel that it approaches perfection.

We ask your comment and criticism of this trial edition.

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A COMPLETE NOVEL • 2 NOVELETTES • BEGINNING A NEW SERIAL

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NEXT MONTH

HE WAS an outlander and a hobo. She was the heir—spoiled but competent—of the great Diamond M Ranch. His were the traditions of the sea and of lusty, hearty men who sailed their great ships proudly across many oceans. Her folks were landsmen who had never seen blue water, whose greatest interests were cattle and grass and the horses with which they worked their mighty herds.

Wilbur Daniel Steele, whose work has been an inspiration to a whole generation of American readers, has taken these two characters and woven about them a story of plains and ships, of quick, strange hatreds, queer, twisted loyalties and reluctant, passionate love—a story which we believe to be as dramatically suspenseful and poignantly moving as anything this great and popular author has ever written.

"The Last Viking" is the ARGOSY novel selection for next month. It is a story no lover of the American West or of the sea will want to miss.

Joel Reeve, a familiar and always welcome figure in these pages, returns next month with the best football novelette of the season. If you like to eat or drink or play football, don't miss "Beef, Beer and Pigskin," a gridiron story you will not soon forget.

The war is over, but the rumblings of its passing still echo among the Alpine mountain passes. John Wells, whose work needs no introduction to ARGOSY readers, has contributed a story, "Dark Mission," which deals with intrigue, danger and sudden death in what was once the world's most pleasant winter playground.

Did you ever try to figure what you would do if you were cast, exhausted and practically naked, on an uninhabited island? Will Jenkins has taken this situation and built around it a story, "Castaway," which will give you all the answers—plus a half hour or so of truly absorbing entertainment.

In "Brother Goodman's Glory Call" William Chamberlain takes us up-country in India to the most unhappy battalion of soldiers left by the late war's backwash. They were lost, those boys, in mud and homesickness, till Brother Goodman proved that courage and pride can become contagious.

In the same issue you will find another long novelette by Frederick J. Bell, a prize-fight story by Eustace Cockrell, the tale of a wild horse by Arthur Mayse, plus three other fiction stories, a selection of timely, important articles, and the usual assortment of informative features and amusing ARGOSY-type cartoons.

"PRO"

BACK TALK

"CON"

THEY KISS AND TELL HOW

Sirs:

The letter of several sailors in Back Talk . . . said, "Kissing from the right is a natural tendency acquired through dancing." Unless they are going to let the girl lead, the girl's head will be on their right and the male's head to the left. I suggest firemen stick to stoking coal. . . .

WILLIAM F. McKEE
Cleveland, Ohio (former S/Sgt. U.S. Army)

Sirs:

. . . I tilt my head to the left while I am kissing my fiancee, who happens to be a Jersey redhead, and she doesn't seem to mind. So I say what is the difference . . . so long as you get the job done?

JOHN MERICLE JR., Ph.M. 3/c
Fort Pierce, Fla.

● Before this interesting subject leads to a free-for-all between the branches of the service, we are setting a thirty-second time limit (on *letters* about it, that is).

WHY NOT JUST SIT?

Sirs:

One writer (in a letter about the tourist-court business) states that one would need $10,500 capital to start in. . . . With that much money, in these days of "sin and sorrow," business grief and government regulations, why enter any kind of business? Why not build just one unit, buy a pipe, a can of PA or ½ & ½ and sit in the shade and watch the world go by?

. . . It would seem that $1,500 for one unit is an excessive price to pay. Units should be built at from $250 to $350. Any man that's handy and can use a hatchet, saw and square can do the work. . . .

Clarksburg, W. Va. L. C. OYSTER, M. D.

FANTASTIC ILLUSION

Sirs:

From Mr. Alexander's letter in Back Talk, he sounds a lot like Adolf Hitler to me. . . . He should go back to Great Britain.

Perhaps . . . he has the fantastic illusion that the U.S.A. has become great through the efforts and skill of only the people he speaks of. He should become better acquainted with American history.

St. Louis, Mo. WILLIAM F. BLIEFERNICH

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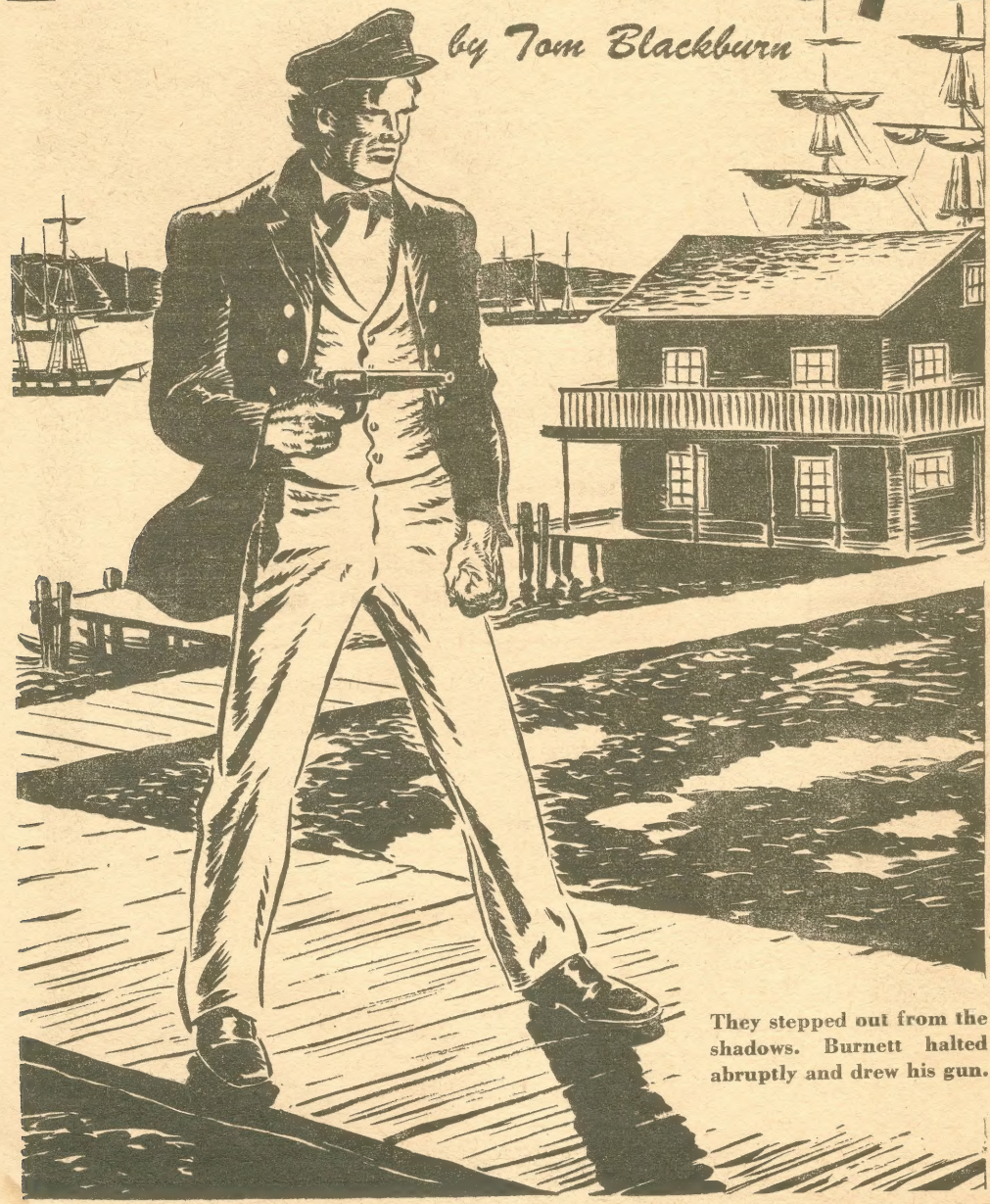
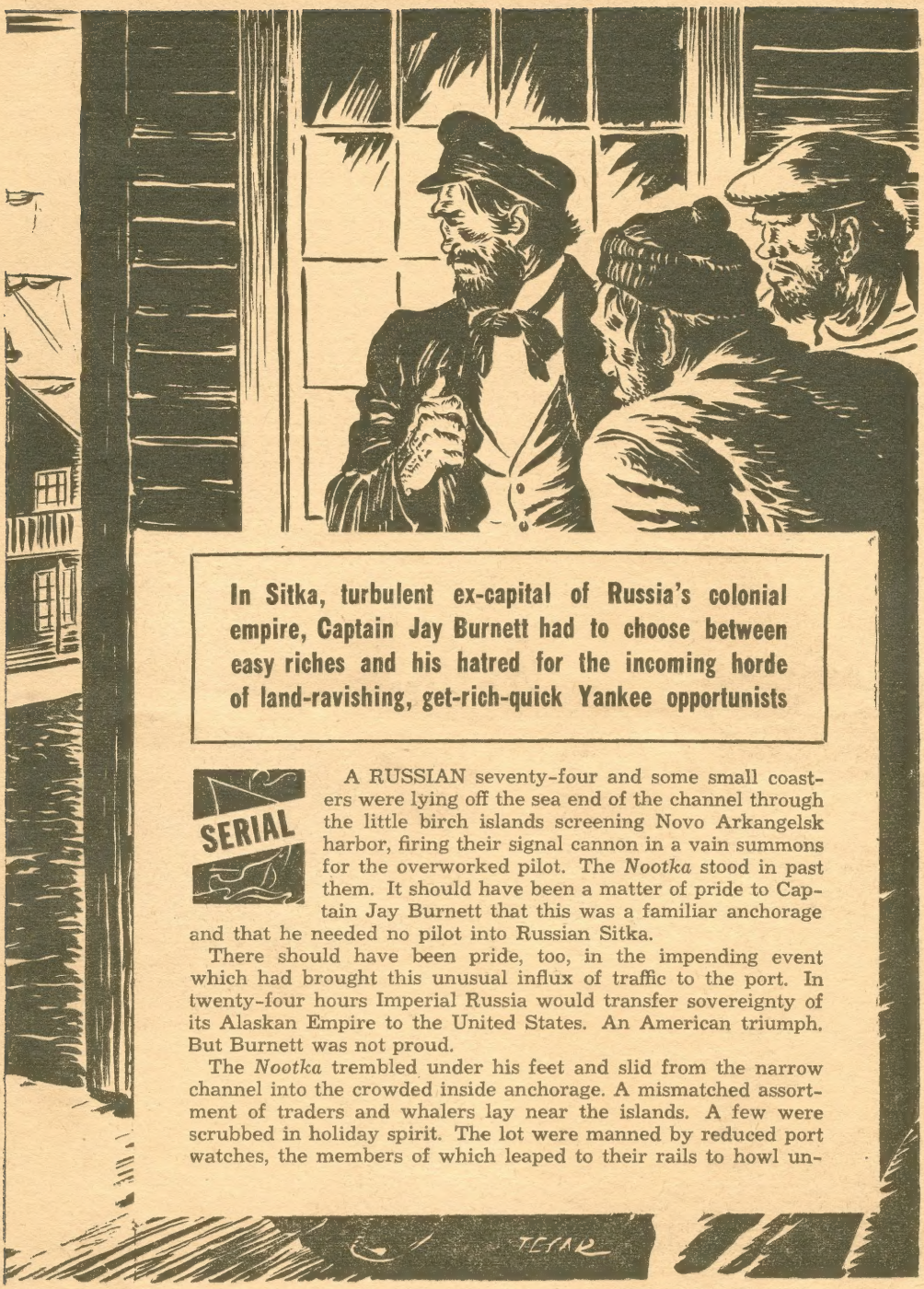
NO LAW NORTH OF 54°

by Tom Blackburn



They stepped out from the shadows. Burnett halted abruptly and drew his gun.



In Sitka, turbulent ex-capital of Russia's colonial empire, Captain Jay Burnett had to choose between easy riches and his hatred for the incoming horde of land-ravishing, get-rich-quick Yankee opportunists

SERIAL

A RUSSIAN seventy-four and some small coasters were lying off the sea end of the channel through the little birch islands screening Novo Arkangelsk harbor, firing their signal cannon in a vain summons for the overworked pilot. The *Nootka* stood in past them. It should have been a matter of pride to Captain Jay Burnett that this was a familiar anchorage and that he needed no pilot into Russian Sitka.

There should have been pride, too, in the impending event which had brought this unusual influx of traffic to the port. In twenty-four hours Imperial Russia would transfer sovereignty of its Alaskan Empire to the United States. An American triumph. But Burnett was not proud.

The *Nootka* trembled under his feet and slid from the narrow channel into the crowded inside anchorage. A mismatched assortment of traders and whalers lay near the islands. A few were scrubbed in holiday spirit. The lot were manned by reduced port watches, the members of which leaped to their rails to howl un-

discriminating welcome as the tall *Nootka* stood past.

There were two excursion boats up from the States with opportunists and tourists. Beyond them, aloof and orderly, were four United States Navy ships which had brought an official party to the cession ceremony. Burnett ran his eyes the length of his deck for his bosun and saw that he was already at the halyards. Jonsson, the mate, broke off talking with the deck load of trappers and hunters they had brought down from Star Inlet, glanced aft, and caught Burnett's nod. He barked a command.

As the *Nootka* ran abeam the senior ship of the naval squadron, her ensign dipped in salute. Burnett shifted his attention to the balance of the harbor. Beyond the Navy lay the Russian American Company's fur fleet. Inshore of these, just off the piers and jetties spurring out from the company's main warehouses ashore, a marking buoy rode over the *Nootka's* mooring. Burnett raised his voice.

"As she goes, Mr. Jonsson. Set a hook astern as we come about on the mooring. And get a small boat overside for those going ashore."

Jonsson bellowed. The *Nootka* heeled under dying way to correct for the buoy. The rigging swarmed. Braces slackened. Wind spilled from white canvas. The crew was an eager and flawless machine. Burnett drew satisfaction from this, sharply reminded himself that it might be short-lived, and took a turn forward. *Oomiaks* and *kyaks* were darting under the *Nootka's* gently hissing cutwater, piloted by grinning Kolosh and Aleut natives who delightedly howled back the warning roars of the leadsman stationed on the cathead. Burnett grinned at them, nodded to the leadsman, and swung aft. 'Mid ships, Rezanov, a trapper from Star Inlet, bared his head and approached respectfully. Sam Tamlik, the Russian's Aleut counterpart, stood a little to one side with earnest, beady-eyed attention.

"Pardon, m'sieu," Rezanov said in the French-flavored pidgin of the Alaskan colony, "a favor. You have trouble—that we know—but you are American. We also have trouble, but we are not of the United States. You would speak to M'sieu Farrell, the new American government man in Sitka? You would urge the United States to keep the Russian fur-hunting laws—the *zapooska*? You would ask protection of the fur islands from the big hunters—for us?"

Burnett frowned. He thrust his own problems momentarily aside. These colonials were a solid people, with faith in Alaska. They did not readily take to Americans. He could, he saw, do Gilbert Farrell a service in passing on Rezanov's plea. Someone who understood currents at work in the colony should set the Treasury man from Washington straight on what faced him here.

"I'll speak to Farrell," he agreed. "But you boys had better get hold of Alexei Politof as soon as you're ashore. He's a sharp trader, but I think he's your friend. And he has influence at the Russian Agency."

The two hunters touched their foreheads and turned away. Nils Jonsson came across the deck to scowl at Burnett.

"You take me 'twixt wind and water, Jay," he complained. "You're in danger of losing the sweetest ship in the North Pacific, yet you'll tack off to mix in the two-penny politics of a bunch of greasy fur killers!"

Burnett shrugged. "If Whit Maitland's up to what I've a hunch he is, lending Rezanov and Sam and the rest of these little fellows a hand is the same as taking a good crack at Maitland—with the off chance of a crack at hanging onto the *Nootka,* too."

Jonsson made a loud, derisive noise, a prerogative rooted in the long years he had sailed with Jay Burnett. A crewman at the outboard rail wheeled suddenly.

"Small boat alongside, sir," he reported. "They're boarding us without hailing for permission."

JONSSON mouthed an oath at this violation of the usage of the sea and headed angrily for the rail. Burnett followed. A dinghy lay below and five men were climbing an outboard boarding net. The first was a clerkish young Russian with a wax-sealed paper in one hand. The second was a thick, coarse-faced man with enormous shoulders and a ragged jet beard. He stepped down onto the deck with a seaman's easy, balanced assurance, and his lips parted in a nasty grin.

Heat flared up in Burnett. This big man was Benjamin Parker, and Ben Parker was a known renegade the length of Alaska. He had begun as a Bedford whaler, a man from a driving, killing, iron-handed school who brought back full barrels and a broken crew from every voyage. But he had been on the Arctic beaches for a number of seasons. His carousals among the natives of The Ranche, Sitka's Indian town, were legend in the colony.

"Get off my deck, Ben!" Burnett said quietly.

Parker's grin widened. He thrust the young Russian forward. The fellow scraped and cleared his throat.

"Captain Jay Burnett?"

"Sing out," Burnett grunted ominously.

"I, sir, am a registered notary employed by Mr. Whitman Maitland to witness and record

the orderly transfer of this ship to him in satisfaction of a due note held by him to your debit. Commodore Parker, commander of the fleet owned by Mr. Maitland, is authorized to accept the transfer in the name of his employer. I request your signature—"

Burnett sucked in a long breath. "That note isn't due till three tomorrow afternoon," he said softly.

"A mere detail, sir," the clerk answered. "Nations are astir in Sitka today. Where could a ship master find five thousand dollars at such a time? I beg you to concede the note—agreeably. It's common sense, sir."

"The hell it is, you stuffed little popinjay!" Burnett roared.

His hand stabbed out to the clerk's collar, jerked the fellow sharply toward him, then reversed the thrust. The notary lost balance, staggered against the rail, upended over it, and dropped cleanly into the sea.

Ben Parker bellowed protest and lumbered forward. Burnett shot one sea boot forward against Parker's shin. Parker doubled involuntarily and was straightened by a hard upward drive to the side of his jaw, a swift whiplash which loosened his joints. Burnett stooped while the big man reeled, and thrust his shoulder through Parker's crotch. He hoisted him from the deck, carried him three long strides, and dumped him overside, almost into the dinghy waiting below.

Jonsson and the *Nootka's* crew moved joyously toward the balance of Parker's party. These went overside in a hasty scramble.

"Commodore," Burnett murmured. "A fleet? So that's why Whit Maitland's been trying to force us out of the way! Nils, that money-bagged son has tromped my last toe. Get a boat overside. If Alexei Politof can do any good for Rezanov and Sam Tamlik and those hunters, maybe he can pull something out of his hat for us, too. It's worth a try. Whit has gone too far, this time. Friendship—daughter—advice—be damned to the lot! He'll know he's been through something before he puts Ben Parker aboard the *Nootka* again!"

CHAPTER TWO

POLITOF was a round-faced, spectacled, intense man with shrewd eyes and the reputation inevitably attached to a sharp trader. Burnett had never been able to fully catalogue him. He had done considerable business with Politof and had seen no evidence of outright dishonesty. Some hunters had complained. But on the other hand, a petition to the chief agent on Baranof Hill got quickest attention when it passed through Alexei to his wife and in turn to Madame Politof's good friend, the wife of the agent, himself.

Alexei answered Burnett's knock on the door of his business room in a front corner of his house on the slope of Baranof Hill. Rezanov and Sam Tamlik were already there, hunched in chairs facing Alexei's big table. Both of the hunters were gray of face.

"M'sieu Burnett!" Rezanov breathed with wide relief. "Friend Politof, repeat what you have just told us. Now we shall see things done!"

Alexei smiled faintly. "Since it concerns friends of his, I doubt Jay will be surprised. Still, he has been up at the inlet for some weeks. It's simple enough. We understand the American financier, now, Jay."

"Maitland?"

"Yes. He's come up through the ice. It's been common knowledge in the Castle for some days that he has concluded arrangements with the agent to buy out the entire company stock of stores and ships for a lump sum—about a hundred and fifty thousand American dollars, I think."

"But the advertised auction—" Burnett protested.

"A gesture for the books only," Alexei answered. "The agent could not afford to pass up so handsome a lump-sum offer on behalf of the company."

"A hundred and fifty thousand—but why, Alexei? Stock and ships together wouldn't be worth over half that in the States. And where else could he resell?"

"Resell?" Rezanov cried. "You don't see it! The *zapooska* is gone. The fur rookeries will not be protected. He has bought ten ships. He stocks them and sends them out into the islands of the Horn. He kills until his holds will take no more fur. He makes a fortune—and he kills Alaska!"

Burnett's lips slowly formed a bitter, ugly word.

"A bold man, this Whitman Maitland," Politof said. "An almost sure scheme. But Sam and Rezanov think there is a way to check him. They have asked me to make arrangements at the Castle and have it suggested to the American, Gilbert Farrell, that he commission your ship as a cutter with you in command, Jay. I have told them it is a futile thing. One ship cannot control a fleet of ten or more."

"Why not?" Burnett asked. "Maitland must think so or he wouldn't have spent six months trying to pry the *Nootka* away from me. And ten-to-one is no odds compared to what we worked against when we ran supplies in and out of Savannah harbor through the whole damned Union navy!"

Politof shrugged. He turned to the two hunters. "It appears I was wrong. Burnett would take the commission. Marya will go to the Agency in the morning to do what can be done there. I myself will see Mr. Farrell if it seems wise—or secure an appointment for Burnett. But it would be a good thing for you to find friends in town and go to the hotel in a body with your plan, Rezanov. Americans hold much in the vote of the people. It might be you could impress Mr. Farrell more than anything I can arrange on the Hill."

TROUBLED but grateful, Rezanov and Tamlik left. Alexei Politof studied Burnett across the top of the desk.

"Odds are odds, Jay, and you are no longer fighting an unfortunate civil war. Why this eagerness to risk the *Nootka* against whatever Maitland can put out into the Horn?"

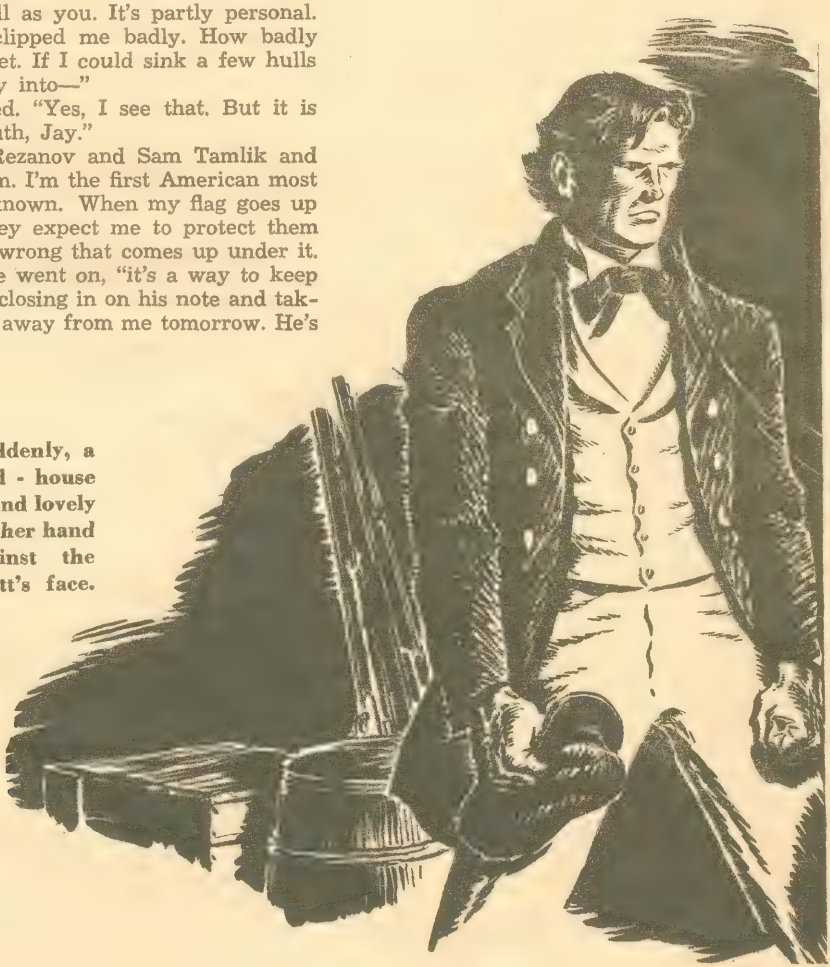
"It's not eagerness," Burnett corrected. "I can add as well as you. It's partly personal. Maitland has clipped me badly. How badly I don't know yet. If I could sink a few hulls he'd put money into—"

Politof nodded. "Yes, I see that. But it is not the full truth, Jay."

"Partly it's Rezanov and Sam Tamlik and others like them. I'm the first American most of them have known. When my flag goes up on the Hill, they expect me to protect them from anything wrong that comes up under it. But mostly," he went on, "it's a way to keep Maitland from closing in on his note and taking the *Nootka* away from me tomorrow. He's so damned sure that he sent Ben Parker out to try taking her over this afternoon. Look—it cost twenty-five to thirty thousand dollars to put a privateer into commission in the Atlantic. Farrell's a Treasury man and the war's only two years past. He'll remember those figures. If he'll let me have seventy-five hundred in cash, I'll be able to settle with Maitland and still put enough supplies aboard to cruise out a decent enough patrol through the Horn. The difference ought to be attractive."

"There's the question of Farrell's authority," Alexei said, "and whether he has funds for such a purpose. I don't believe it will work, Jay."

Politof's deliberateness fanned an anger in



She swung suddenly, a blurred round - house sweep of arm and lovely shoulders, and her hand exploded against the side of Burnett's face.

Burnett which had not completely ebbed since Ben Parker boarded the *Nootka*.

"All right, then!" he growled. "You're supposed to be a friend. I wrote you for help. Produce it, because win, lose, or draw, I'm hanging onto my ship!"

Alexei grinned broadly, a smug satisfaction in his eyes. He stood up. "A man can't always produce help on demand, even for a friend. It is more difficult when there is no fee involved. But I will do what I can."

Politof crossed to a door, opened it, and spoke to an Aleut servant beyond. The Aleut padded down an interior hall. Alexei remained in the doorway, waiting. Burnett grew impatient. He was in no mood for games. Alexei's smug expression troubled him.

Presently there was fresh movement in the hall. Alexei stepped out of the doorway with a small, courteous bow. A woman swept past him into the room. She crossed to his desk and halted beside it to measure Burnett with a swift look. She tilted her head up.

"This is the best you could do, Alexei?" she said.

The woman was a sudden, hard impact against Burnett. Everything about her—youth, figure, face—was compelling. But the impact went beyond this. She had a strangely forthright beauty, a kind of physical honesty. Behind this was a tempered sureness which glinted like steel in her eyes and stirred a vague warning in Burnett's mind.

He returned her stare with an effort at blandness.

Politof laughed. "Miss Sharon Dunnevan, Captain Jay Burnett." Politof crossed and sat on the edge of his table so that his elbow was in contact with the woman's arm. She gave him a quick, blunt glance, but did not move away.

"I've been saving you two for each other—in a business way," Alexei said. "I have already told Miss Dunnevan about you, Jay. She has come up here from San Francisco with capital from the sale of certain properties there and has retained me as her agent. She intends to buy supplies from the Russian company and send a ship on a fur hunt into the Horn as soon as the Russian *zapooska* ceases to function. I suggested the *Nootka* to her."

Politof shot a knowing look at Burnett. Incongruous and ridiculous as this girl's presence and purpose were in Sitka, she had money. Here was a way to retain the *Nootka*—

Illustrated by Joseph Tesar

and a way for Alexei to pick up a fat broker's fee—if Rezanov's plea to Gilbert Farrell failed.

Burnett leaned forward. "Why the fur trade, Miss Dunnevan?" he asked.

"Because," she answered, "I happen to want a million dollars. And hunting fur in the Horn seems a good way to get it."

"The fur trade in the Aleutian Horn isn't a genteel affair, Miss Dunnevan, and the Bering Sea is not San Francisco Bay—"

She looked at him defiantly. "I'm not a genteel person, Captain Burnett. The property my father left me happened to be a run-down little saloon in San Francisco. I managed the place, and when I sold it, the Golden Gate Club was worth more than the best block of property on the waterfront. You can't build up a business like that and remain soft—and genteel."

"Your money would be better invested in a trade that suits your—ah—talents," said Burnett blandly. "A dance hall, perhaps—"

Sharon Dunnevan's color deepened. "I want a ship from you—not advice!" she flared. "I have money to pay you—and I want more money. That's why I intend to hunt fur in the Horn."

BURNETT stood up. It was inevitable, he supposed, that if illegal opportunity here would draw a man of Whit Maitland's bloodless greed, it would also draw others of a like kind. But a woman—a dancehall girl out for a kill—

"You'll have to find a different ship," he said flatly.

She compressed her lips. "Why? Why do you refuse?"

"Because, sweetheart, the Russian goods are already sold by secret agreement. Getting supplies would have to be a back-door deal. If Alexei—through his wife—fell down in dickering with Madame Politof's friends on the Hill, you'd lose out. The chief agent is happily married to a beautiful woman. You'd be able to do nothing with him personally."

The girl leaned forward in anger. Burnett grinned and raised his hand.

"There's more," he said. "There's Whitman Maitland. You'd be bucking him and everything he could hire to throw against you. If you're from San Francisco you know of him. One of the early traders in Central Pacific Railroad stock, he squeezed out a lot of the visionary little fellows who first backed the line, then resold his holdings to the Big Four at a huge profit."

Sharon Dunnevan nodded and spoke in a small, carefully controlled voice which contrasted strangely with her earlier fire. "Yes. I know of Whit Maitland, all right."

"Maitland," Burnett continued, "is the one who's tied up the Russian goods and the ten Russian ships in the harbor. He's been cooling his heels here for months, waiting for the cession with your exact plan in mind. And I can tell you from personal experience that he'll blot out any competition." Burnett's smile turned bleak. "You may think you've known the roughest men and can make your way among them, but you haven't—even in your San Francisco saloon."

Sharon Dunnevan slid from the desk. "That's all?" she asked ominously.

"No," Burnett answered. "I've made friends in this colony. Regardless of what damned flag flies at Sitka, the fur out in the Horn belongs to them—to Alaska. I've turned down one ice-blooded pirate and I'd turn down another if she had the wings of an angel to go with her face!"

Sharon Dunnevan took a quick stride forward so that her angry face was a scant two feet from Burnett's own.

"I don't mind being kicked if I know what for!" she said furiously. "But when somebody starts tromping me just to hear the squash, there's a fight on. You're not man enough to save your ship and take what you want in a free-for-all. All you've got is enough cheap courage to whack at a woman. Well, mister, you've got your whacking due back!"

She swung suddenly, a blurred round-house sweep of arm and lovely shoulders, and her hand exploded against the side of his face. Burnett was startled, then shaken with a full, stinging rage. Even in anger this girl was provocative. He knew she had intended to be provocative from the beginning. The faint perfume about her, the daring revelations of her strapless dress, the curl of her full lips —these had been bait. And he hated her for using it on him.

"So I won't take what I want?" he muttered harshly. His hands shot out to her shoulders and jerked her roughly against him. She struggled in a quick frenzy. As he bent forward, he caught a glimpse of Politof, wearing an honest expression of complete bafflement. Beyond Alexei, standing in the rear doorway, he saw the trader's Asiatic wife, small and languorous and lethal in her own right, watching the scene before her with brightened eyes and parted lips. Then Sharon Dunnevan's mouth was under his own and his grip tightened with a possessive, dominant demand.

The contact was shock, raw and undiluted. She squirmed in his arms a moment more and Burnett heard the running, softly snapping sound of parting dresshooks. Then, suddenly, she surrendered limply. A roaring

came up in Burnett's ears and what he had begun as harsh mockery stabbed deeply into him, leaving him shaken and a little shamed and with his anger at an even higher pitch.

He freed her and stepped back, groping for the door.

"Get her to hell out of here!" he barked raggedly over his shoulder at Alexei. "Get her on tomorrow night's excursion and headed back to the States!"

Marya Politof, in the rear doorway, was smiling broadly. And much closer at hand, Burnett could hear soft and throaty laughter as he jerked open the door.

CHAPTER THREE

A CARRIAGE was drawn up to the gutter a few rods below Politof's house. With his head down and his mind set on the bar of the St. Petersburg Hotel, Burnett did not see it until he was nearly onto it. The coachman got down and dragged open the door as he came abreast. Burnett veered to pass, but a woman's voice reached out to him.

"Jay, your crew's been ashore an hour but you haven't been up to the house. What's the matter?"

Nora Maitland was leaning forward on the seat, a small, pouting line drawn into her smooth forehead between the carefully regular arches of her brows. She reached out a gloved hand in a pretty, beseeching gesture. Still ridden by his anger, and for the moment wholly willing to sweep the deck entirely clean while he was about it, Burnett stepped up into the coach. The door swung closed and the coach rolled slowly on down the rutted hill.

Nora had eased back into the cushions and the inscrutable gray of her eyes probed at Burnett. "It's been months since you've kept me waiting like this, Jay. What is it? Have you found an Aleut woman up there on the rocks of the Inlet?"

The sudden answering fire his lips had found in Sharon Dunnevan flashed involuntarily across Burnett's mind, and he shook his head with a wry twist of his lips. "No, not an Aleut—"

Nora's eyes narrowed. She moved closer to him and dropped one hand carelessly onto his knee. "Then we're to start keeping secrets from each other, now? What is it, Jay?"

Her hand was warm within her glove. He shifted position abruptly.

"The secrets started a long time ago, Nora," he said bluntly. "But they've just started turning up, now. I've had time to think while I was at the Inlet. Time to go back over the rotten luck that's run my way since the first time I danced with you. I've been a good game for you. But it's done. I'm not coming up to the house."

He felt a tremor in the woman beside him, but her expression did not change. She only nodded slowly.

"I told father this was coming. And it hasn't been as good a game as you think, Jay. Not for me. It's so close to the deadline now that I was afraid you would see what father's campaign has been—that you would suddenly understand what he has been trying to do to you, and why. You pretend to be a quiet man, Jay, but you're not. There's a high, strong strain of violence in you and mostly I think I was afraid of it. That's why I came looking for you."

"A damned poor reason," Burnett said flatly. "What can you do, now?"

"Talk reason; talk sense. Listen to me, please, Jay. Come on into the house. Let me finish, at least. If things had all gone wrong here, if father's plans had not headed right, I still would want this talk with you —about us—"

Burnett glanced out the window. The carriage had rolled to a stop in the yard of the large house Maitland had hired. He stepped out and helped Nora down. Darkness had lowered. They started up the walk together. While he was here, Burnett decided, he would do this completely. He would have freedom from Nora and her father at the same time.

Nora turned aside in the central hall of the house and led the way to her rooms in the east wing. She closed the door, took off her cloak and drew Jay onto a settee under the window.

She leaned back and looked lazily upward. A dead man could not have ignored such an invitation. Burnett kissed her. He straightened after a long moment. Nora smiled.

"The taste is different, Jay?" she asked. "The last six months of you and me have been emptied by what you've discovered of father's plans? Oh, Jay, don't be a fool! Do you know the most important word in the world? It's security—made up of freedom and money. Whit Maitland has nothing against you. If anything, he feels admiration. He wouldn't stand in our way, Jay. Not if he knew that you and your ship were quitting Alaska or—" Nora paused; her lashes came down. "—or if some tie bound you to him so he knew where you stood and where you would stay."

Her mouth was soft, now, her lips parted. Burnett bent again. She stirred and pulled away after a little.

"You see?" she murmured softly. "We could stay until the big (*Continued on page* 117)

QUADRUPLE *Threat*

by Philip Wylie

PERHAPS every decade produces a young man like Charles Dickenson. If so, however, there is no evidence to show that any such product of heritage and training has lent his extraordinary services to the great and serious American game of football. Indeed, Charles's participation in the sport at the university of his choice was a matter of accident. It took place against his own judgment and will.

On a lazy spring afternoon, when the collegiate-Gothic edifices of Purnell University were at a loss to maintain their dignity in the presence of a wilderness of forsythia and a colored snow of crocuses, Mr. Dickenson was solemnly and breath-takingly gyrating in a series of giant swings on a horizontal bar in the gymnasium. After he had cut off and come to the mat, the gym coach came over.

"Charles," he said, "I've got a job for you."

"What?" the young man asked.

"Well," said the coach, showing that he was not sure of his ground, "I'm pretty darned busy—and somebody has to do it. Matter of school spirit."

"Count me out then," said Charles. "Exams are coming. I've used up my school spirit for the year."

"They'll be here in about ten minutes."

"Who?"

"The co-ed cheer-leaders," said the coach. "They decided, for next year's football season, that they'd like to learn a few stunts. Cartwheels and maybe handsprings—if we can teach 'em without spraining some sweetie-pie's wrist."

Charles leaned against a leather horse. "Great," he said. "If there's one thing on earth I hate, it's girl cheer-leaders. A shoddy exploitation of sex. A horror. I will teach 'em nothing, coach. As captain-elect of next year's gym team, I will not even teach 'em to hop backwards in unison on one foot with megaphones over their heads. As a high-minded lover of all that is decent in athletics, I will not—"

He stopped speaking.

A young woman had entered the men's gymnasium. A young woman whom Charles had not happened to notice among the four

The amusing—yet suspenseful—story of a topflight halfback who could see the fun in football but not the glory

thousand-odd students of Purnell. She was very lithe, very beautiful, and very embarrassed. She was wearing a pale blue dress, knee-length stockings, wedge-soled blue shoes, and she had hair, which was reddish-gold, cut in a sort of page-boy bob at the back and moulded, above her temples, in two small mounds of loose curls. Charles liked girls. But there were things about the girls of his era which he did not like. Chief among the objects of his distaste were wedge-shaped soles, knee-length stockings, baby blue, and the currently favored style of hair-do.

The girl spoke to the coach. "Are you Mr. Walters?"

"Yes. And this is Mr. Dickenson. Miss Gloria Tarleton. She's head cheer-leader, Charlie."

The president-elect of the gym team made no direct acknowledgment of the introduction. He walked over to a long mat and threw himself into a mathematically perfect spasm of handsprings, twists and flips. It was a reasonably insulting gesture, a manner of saying in pantomime, "Go home, young woman, and play with your dolls."

Gloria, however, did not retreat. Instead, she, too, walked over to the mat. She took a stance in the middle of it. She shut her well-carved jaw, straightened her mouth, turned a little pale, and she also threw herself into the air. Her bent, spread knees described the

Westie's signals made no sense to Charlie, but the others understood.

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full arc of a circle. Her bronze-gold hair clipped the mat as her head went around. Her baby-blue skirt slipped and whipped in the maneuver. She landed hard on both wedge-shaped soles, lost her balance, and rolled over on her back.

The coach gasped.

Charles, being more practical and quicker, leaped to the girl's side. "You hurt?"

"Not much," Gloria answered, trying to rub various spots in a way that suggested she needed half a dozen hands. "Just jarred. I've done plenty of back flips from a diving board, but I never tried one on the ground before."

"Huh!" said Charles. He assisted the young lady to her feet. He watched her rearrange her clothing. His expression showed that he was willing to compromise to some extent, even with a lady who represented in one slim shape so many of his fiercest prejudices. "I understand," he continued, "that you and some other girls want to learn a few tricks for next year's football games."

"Yes," said the girl meekly. "If you think we could—and if you'll give us the time."

"If there are any more like you on the squad," Charlie answered, "next year's games ought to be quite a spectacle."

That was the beginning of many ice-cream sodas, an occasional beer, reciprocal tutoring in various subjects, trips to Gate City's amusement park, long walks in the woods around the Graduate Club, close association at the Junior Prom, rides together in good cars and jalopies, and much serious discussion about Life, interspersed with vehement if deferential kisses.

Gloria learned that Charles was the son of a printer in a midwestern city and his mother was a handsome woman who had been born into a circus, practiced there as a lady aerialist, and settled down happily with the printer as the mother of Charles and his younger brothers. She also found out that Charles was not only captain-elect of the gym team but a member of the fencing team, that he played soccer, and that he was the best sprinter in school.

"Why," she asked frequently, "don't you go out for football? You're plenty big, plenty strong, plenty fast?"

Charles always replied, "Because."

On his part, he found out that Gloria was the daughter of the head of the psychology department, that she was on the girls' swimming team, and that, by and large, womanhood had not touched any real high until Gloria had turned nineteen. He grew to like the curls-at-the-temple hair-do, wedge soles, baby blue, and even knee-length stockings. There was, in his opinion, only one flaw in her: Together with nearly every other member of Purnell's undergraduate body, she was obsessed with the impressive record of her Alma Mater in the mighty sport of football. She was a cheer-leader, a fan, a fanatic. In the course of eight weeks of hallowed companionship, he discovered that it was necessary to avoid the topic of football. That was difficult, because whenever she noted the smooth slope of his broad shoulders, or whenever she felt around her waist the hard sinews of his strong right arm, she almost automatically thought of football.

"I don't like the game," he said, and he never said any more—which, Gloria thought, was the one grievous flaw in him.

He might have known that, with a woman, to think is to act. Even when a woman thinks she is thinking, she is likely to act.

THE results of Gloria's thoughts took the form of an invasion of Charles's rooms on a mild May afternoon by a barrel-bodied man with a bald head, simian arms, and a rugged face that made up in amiability what it lacked in humor. He sat down in Charles's window seat, looked outside at a bed of tulips for a moment, and said, "I'm Ames. The football coach."

Charles nodded. "I know it."

"See here, Dickenson. Why didn't you come out last fall for football?"

Charles gave an answer which was the exact opposite of the one he had so often given Gloria. "Because I like football."

The coach was startled. "I don't get you. Frankly, Dickenson, if Purnell knew the facts about you, the campus would be furious. I've been investigating, here and in your hometown. I've found out that for two years you were the best back they'd ever had in your high school—and that you quit the game your senior year without any given reason. Here, you're on other teams, in other sports. You have plenty of the old Purnell spirit. You aren't scared. You're tough as rawhide. You play a marvelous game of school ball—and you don't show up for collegiate practice. It mystifies me. I can't make you play, of course, but I can come mighty close to it, if I put on the pressure of opinion around here. What's the matter?"

Charles had listened. Now, he opened a box of chocolate-covered caramels, offered one to the coach, who refused, and began to chew reflectively. "Just what I said, Mr. Ames. I like football. More than any other game I ever played. I'm good at it. I can run and I can also kick, pass, and block."

The coach stared. "What the deuce—"

"I play games for fun." Charles slapped his right hand with his left, thus catapulting another caramel into his mouth. "That's why I quit. You and everybody in this school have forgotten the meaning of the word 'game'. I would enjoy playing football for fun. Not to win—except incidentally. Not for old Siwash—except secondarily. Not to get my name in the papers. Not to pay my way through college. If football were a game in this university, I'd be out there practicing every day. But, since it's a profession—and a darned hard and ornery profession—I prefer to keep my amateur standing. Get me?"

"No," the coach answered bitterly. "I don't. Of all the rotten, cheap garbage I ever listened to—"

"Ah!" Charles exclaimed. "There you go! The old locker-room propaganda! Trying to shame me. Now, if you were able to promise me that I could have a little fun once in a while, I might consider adding one manpower to your team. But you can't. From the minute I joined, everything would be so serious there wouldn't be a minute of fun in a year's work. We have to beat Wallace, Stetcher Tech, State, Bulwer, and so on. That's why I enjoy soccer. We're fifth in the league, and nobody comes to the games to yell their heads off to keep us from losing. That's why I like to fence—one guy against you at a time, and none of the old team stuff. Why, playing football's just like being in an army!"

"Gloria," said the coach, "will be interested in this."

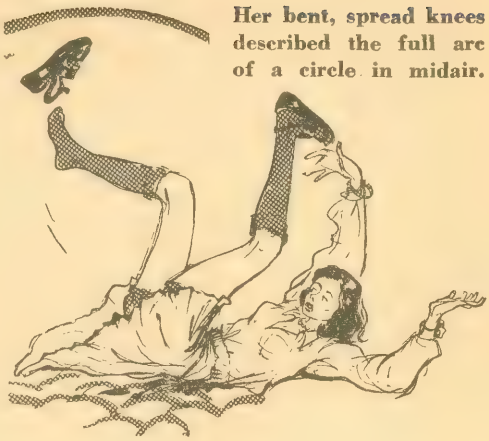
Charles leaped like a man with hotfoot. "What's she— You mean you'll tell her?"

"I mean she helped me investigate."

The young man sat down slowly. "I see." It was his turn to stare at the tulips, and he stared with the acidity of all men who have been put on the spot by women. He knew he was beaten—knew it would be a choice between Gloria and autumn on the gridiron. "Look, coach," he began, and Mr. Ames smiled at this lapse back to a disavowed jargon, "I'd just mess up your team. No kidding. I'm the kind of a guy that has to enjoy what he's doing, or I can't play. I mean, get a kick out of it. I'd—I'd—demoralize the other fellows. I can't get it through my head the game's serious, even with a mob watching and all the fellows doing and dying. I can't!"

"We're starting summer practice," the coach murmured, "up at Lakeview in the mountains in August. Gloria's dad will be line coach for a month—he's an old Purnell star—and Gloria will be there. I'm willing to take a chance on your game. You might even have fun."

Which was why, in August, Charles left his



Her bent, spread knees described the full arc of a circle in midair.

Illustrated by William von Riegen

midwestern home and journeyed to Lakeview. Why he settled down to signal drill and preliminary training. And why he had fun, evenings, in a canoe.

WORD spread among sports writers, as such word does, that Purnell had something coming along for fall in its backfield. Charles got quite a good advance press. Mr. Ames saw to that. He felt it would put his new player on his mettle. And it made Gloria ecstatic. The coach was also ecstatic, but worried. True, in all his eighteen years of coaching, he'd never had a man who could rifle a pass with such speed and accuracy. He'd never possessed a kicker who could get such distance and accuracy with a punt. He'd never had a man of any weight who hit the line as hard as Charlie hit it with his one hundred and eighty-eight pounds. But there was something wrong with r.h. Dickenson.

The coach couldn't put his finger on it—quite. A scouting alumnus said Charles was "insouciant." The coach agreed, although he didn't know what the word meant. Gloria's father said he was "negativistic"—which gave Mr. Ames another blank. It was the way Charles played. He liked to whistle. He liked to do little jigs when signals were being called. He was fond of practical joking. Thus, when he discovered that his quarterback had the habit of slapping his teammates on the flank just before a play, Charles provided himself with a toy whistle which emitted a bleat when he was slapped. It disorganized that particular play. Small things, which the coach disciplined out of existence as quickly as they appeared. Nevertheless, Charles always produced a new one.

When September waned and another school year had commenced, there came a hot, sunny Saturday afternoon which brought out some ten thousand spectators besides the undergraduate body to observe the opening game with Wallace College. These many people scarcely sprinkled the Booth Culp Jordan Memorial Stadium. It was understood that Wallace had a fine team for a small school, but no difficulty was anticipated. And there was no difficulty. Purnell, according to the perspiring and vexed mutterings of the coach, couldn't remember its signals, couldn't block, couldn't pass, unless Charles did the passing, and should have been penalized ten times as much as it was, for off-side. However, Purnell held Wallace to nothing-nothing for the first half and on three occasions came close to making a touchdown.

During the intermission, Mr. Ames sputtered like a leaky steam-fitting for five minutes and roared like a bursted boiler for three more. Then the Purnell boys trotted out on the field, full of chagrin and wrath, to confront the boys from Wallace, who had been inspired to hope that by some miracle of luck and strength they might go through two more scoreless quarters.

They were not surprised when the much-vaunted Charles Dickenson plucked a fumble out of the air, tore around the end of a pile-up and ran some thirty yards down the field in the clear. They were surprised, however, when the Purnell right halfback slowed at that point, observed that he was quite alone on his segment of the field, and then danced toward and over the goal with all the nonchalance of a young girl skipping rope on the sidewalk. Charles ended his skip-step with a pirouette that included the throwing of imaginary flowers from an imaginary vase, i.e., the pigskin—which, thereafter, he delicately grounded.

Ten thousand persons, who had been yelling violently as Charles had started his run, commenced to roar with laughter. The coach threw his hat on the greensward and trampled it. "Lousy show-off!" he bellowed. "I'll talk to him!"

Later in the game, there was an hysterical roar of amusement over another play Charles made. He had faded back to pass. His teammates provided him with inadequate defense. He saw that he was going to be rushed and thrown before he could find an acceptable receiver for the ball. So he tossed it high into the air at a peculiar angle, ducked the two Wallace ends, ran transversely across the field at a furious pace, and caught his own pass, which he then advanced twenty-one yards, setting the stage for a second Purnell touchdown. The third, and final Purnell touchdown was made in a normal manner. Charles took two Wallace men from the path of the ball carrier with a brilliant violence that made even the coach relent some degree of his planned outburst. The game was over —and handily won.

"What," the coach asked Charles, as rubbers slapped bruised thighs, showers hissed and steamed, and the hot afternoon was made heavy with damp panting and damper perspiration, "did you think you were doing?"

"Having fun," Charles said placidly. "I felt sorry for those Wallace fellows. They were bursting their hearts trying to beat us. And we're too big—too professional—for them. I wasn't kidding them so much as the game. And I think they realized it."

Mr. Ames choked, and before he could recover, Charles ducked into a shower.

GLORIA spoke of the matter that night at Wander's Inn, over one banana frappé—for her—and one plain vanilla ice cream—for Charles. "Clowning like that," she said. "I was so humiliated I cried!"

"But, darling," the young man protested. "Look at the beautiful back-flips you girls do to lead the cheers! That's a form of clowning. A high form. Entertainment. Aren't we muddy, bloody heroes of old Purnell also entertainers? Don't people pay a dollar sixty-five now, and four-forty later in the season to be entertained? *Toujours gai,* that's me."

"I don't want to talk about it," she said.

She wanted to talk even less on the following Saturday evening. Stetcher Tech had been a bigger game. Tech was known to be tough, and there were twenty-five thousand people on hand to see that game.

It was a good game. A good game with curious additions provided by the right halfback. Charles developed a habit of shaking his head, sadly, whenever the Tech quarterback called a signal. After the signal was called, however, Charles seemed to know what it meant, because he went to the point indicated and smeared the play—or helped smear it—almost every time. He would shake his head ruefully and then charge in as if the whole tactic of his opponents had been absurdly, even pitifully, misconceived. Then, in the second quarter, with Purnell trailing, when an official had carried back the ball in a fifteen yard penalty which Charles, his teammates, and the stands felt was undeserved, Charles had followed along behind the mordant official—goose-stepping. There had been a belting roar of laughter from the stands. The official had put down the ball and spun around suspiciously, only

to find Charles lifting a speck carefully from the path of play. The laughter had intensified and the game had gone on, but the official had not regained his poise.

Indeed, some minutes later, he had had the misfortune to be in the path of a rather elaborate reverse which had ended up with Charles in possession of the ball. Confronted by the white-clad figure of the penalizing official, Charles had checked his rush dead, and again goose-stepped around the man. The maneuver, strictly a play to the gallery, had cost valuable fragments of a second and Charles was pulled down with a three-yard loss. He rose from the pile-up, shaking his head mournfully at the official.

Mr. Ames had stamped on his hat again. Gloria had bitten deep into her program. However, on the next play, Charles had shot a pass over the goal line which evened the score.

In the third quarter, Charles had run forty-eight yards for a second touchdown—to the accompaniment of yelling, applause, and more laughter. A genius at dodging, his progress through a broken field was made in a series of hops, jerks, lunges, spins, and even rapid backward steps.

Charles had his regular lecture from Mr. Ames. It was a lecture tempered by the fact that Purnell had licked Tech twenty to nine. But Charles was unable to effect a rapprochment with Gloria until the middle of the week. However, there had been sportswriters in considerable volume at the Tech game. Sunday's papers marked the beginning of efforts to find a name for Charles. "Dopey Dickenson" was one such. "The Clown" was another. Charles became "The Clown" after the game with State on the third Saturday. Newsreels, revealing the astonishing play which fixed the name upon him, made motion-picture audiences everywhere hold their breath.

Charles tried to alibi it, to live it down. It was not difficult insofar as the student body was concerned. But it was impossible to make headway with Gloria.

THEY were sitting, on a Thursday evening, on Gloria's front porch. The air was full of autumn aromas, and night song from a nearby dormitory. Gloria was full of peevishness. "I don't care what you say," she insisted. "I told you I was busy. You had no right to come here to the house! You've made a joke out of Purnell football—and out of yourself!"

"I didn't mean it," Charles repeated moodily. "I didn't. Look, Gloria. The going was slow. The State boys are a bunch of miners and plug-uglies. Billy Conover got his nose busted by a fist—and he's a particular friend of mine. So we lined up. In the huddle, Westie called for me. Grodan slammed the ball back. Westie shoved it to me. I ran like hell. That's what I'm supposed to do, isn't it? All right. So the end on State—Gillis—makes a dive for me. He imagines he's trailing his foot—which is legal—but he isn't—which is not."

"I know," Gloria said coldly. "It's all in slow motion at the Bijoux."

"Not everything. Just part. Look. I'm running as fast as I can. This Gillis is whizzing at me. I try to jump up as high as possible so he'll sluice under me. And he does, only his head hits my right foot, winging it up as if I'd been tripped by a wire. So what? So I'm about to sprawl on my handsome mug in the mud, thirty yards from the goal and nobody in front of me. But I'm high in the air and I've got a lot of what the dean calls angular momentum from this Gillis beaning my tootsie. So what next? I tuck, whip down the brainpan, and go into a front flip. Naturally, having done thousands, I come out on my feet. Naturally, I keep running. Naturally, since there's nobody in front of me, I go clear across the white line for dear old Purnell. This happens to be the only score in the game. With anybody else running the ball, it would have been genius. With me—because the newspapers call me a clown—it only rouses hysteria in the loving public. See?"

Gloria stared hotly through the murk, an irritated young woman, pretty, but in a non-cooperative mood. "And naturally," she continued, "having finished this miraculous run, you whip out of your pants a large silk handkerchief in the State colors and ostentatiously wipe off the ball! You make me sick!"

"Oh," said Charles, "that! Well, just a stratagem. Nothing against it in the rule book. I had the kerchief ready in case of hard going. Something to flash that might sort of demoralize the State fellows and start a little fun. Liven things up. There it was in my pants, and the ball was mighty mucky—"

Gloria bit hard on her lower lip.

Professor Tarleton, her father, came up the steps. He was an old football player. Charles hoped for a bit of palaver to lighten relations between himself and the professor's daughter.

The professor acknowledged Charles's presence with a scowl. "Good evening," he began. He paused vibrantly. "Clownie," he added. Then he went into the house.

Gloria followed him.

Charles walked toward his rooms. His mind was mixed and depressed. He was

sure that people—people everywhere—took their football much too seriously. It's supposed to be a *game,* he kept thinking. But he did not like to make Gloria Tarleton angry.

There were visitors waiting for him at the dorm. Nine fellows. The majority of the varsity backfield, and a couple of ends.

"We've been waiting for you," said Westie, the quarter.

"For what?" Charles inquired.

They tried to break it in unison. Westie shut them up. "Look," he said. "We've got a wonderful idea! That freak stuff you've been pulling has got the teams we're going to meet all balled up. So we thought, why not get together and work out a couple of nifties we all come in on? If we told Ames, he'd raise sin. But if we just get together and add a few signals of our own and spring something real screwy out of a huddle, we think we'd make those Bulwer guys, for instance, lose their minds. See?"

"Yeah," said Charles. "I see." He broke open a box of caramels. He passed it. There was one left for him. He popped it into his mouth. "And let me tell you something. We've got some hard games to play. We've got a darned good team. Running like oiled machinery. I may pull a few gags in those games, just because I don't seem to be able to get as serious about old Purnell's glory as some people. But if you dopes try to invent any sort of louse play, take it from me—you'll regret it."

Charles was following along—goosestepping.

There was a disappointed silence.

"What's the matter," Dominique, the blocking left half, finally asked, "you want all the glory for yourself?"

"No," said Charles. "I wish I'd never joined the squad. But I'm telling you—no hooie."

They went away.

THE Bulwer squad arrived on Friday. On Saturday, by train, plane, and traffic jam, some fifty thousand people poured themselves toward Purnell and collected in the stadium, like a multi-hued puddle, to look, roar, and laugh, to whistle and stamp when player Number 103 trotted out onto the field. Charles was 103.

From the kick-off, it was a wicked game. Even Charlie's famous field tactics did not seem to aid. The first Bulwer punt, for example, swung lazily toward him. He stood his ground and, for a moment, looked away to wave and nod at Gloria, who was sitting on a long gilt bench. The crowd gasped, thinking Charlie had failed to note the ball was coming. But he looked back in time, caught it, and began his customary gallop. He merely began it. The Bulwer captain had evidently aimed the ball at Charlie. Most of the Bulwer team had also aimed at him. He went down under an avalanche.

In the pile-up, somebody yanked his padding aside and knifed him a half-dozen handblows across the juncture of his shoulder and his neck. Those in the stands who could see, booed the Bulwer team. But no officials saw. Charlie rose with a severe pain in his shoulder and a temporarily paralyzed right arm. A Bulwer tackle muttered to him, "Let that be a lesson to you." The Bulwer captain came over and said, "You okay?"

Charlie realized that he was staggering a little. Staggering, and rubbing his shoulder. He realized that the Purnell stands were waiting, aghast, for his response to his opponent's solicitude. He deliberately turned his stagger into a horrid limp. He limped as if he were on the verge of toppling to the ground. Three steps, six. An official trotted toward him. The home side of the stadium was tomblike. The Bulwer captain stepped up to give Charlie a hand. And Charlie pulled himself together. He went away from the Bulwer captain with three perfect back flips.

Purnell cheered loud enough to waken Booth Culp Jordan.

Mr. Ames wished he had broken glass to grind between his teeth.

Gloria ploughed the edge of her gilded megaphone into the grass.

The game went on.

It went for twenty-eight ferocious minutes. Neither side scored. Bulwer's tackle carried a fumble deep into Purnell territory. Westie threw him. Dominique pushed back the next play. Charlie stopped the next, and the one after that, and Charlie kicked out of danger. His arm was all right again. He was having fun. It was going to be a real fight.

After twenty-eight minutes, it happened.

Purnell held the ball in the middle of the field. Purnell huddled. Charlie bent down and heard Westie utter signals that made no sense to him. But the other nine men seemed to understand. They broke out of the huddle and trotted back to the scrimmage line. Charlie, by that time, began to guess what was going to happen. The team took up an idiotic formation—a four-one-one-two-two formation—with Charlie standing bemused in mid-backfield. The Bulwer men muttered and tried to improvise a defense. Mr. Ames grabbed off his fedora and Gloria sank her white teeth in her souvenir program.

The ball was snapped. The hounds from Bulwer moved forward. The Purnell backfield began a complicated series of reverses. Westie took the ball as if to throw it, and held still in that position. Carnalin cut around from right end and grabbed the ball. So far so good, Charlie thought. The old Statue of Liberty play. However, Carnalin ran back two yards and across the field six, and he, too, made as if to pass. Casey came through behind him and seized the pigskin. A second Statue of Liberty. Meanwhile the Bulwer backfield and the Bulwer line were moving into the Purnell territory—moving with speed, but disconcertedly. Charlie absently blocked one of them and hurried back toward the place where Casey was posing as if to pass and where Grodan was cutting around to take the ball again. A third Statue of Liberty.

Charlie knew. This was the play they had invented. The play the coach didn't know about. The one Charlie had refused to consider. This was supposed to baffle and outwit, to flabbergast and demoralize, the Bulwer team. As Charlie saw it at that point, the play had certainly flabbergasted Bulwer. It had also lost Purnell about twenty-five yards—and it was still going on—with Gant taking the ball from Grodan's Statue. It was so insane, so hopeless, and so funny to watch, that Charles was nearly overcome with mirth. But he fought it down and charged back toward Gant with the vague idea of tackling his own man to prevent further disaster. A gag was a gag. This was murder.

Bulwer men were running beside him. Charlie shouldered one out of his stride and reached Gant, who was also posing. There was nobody to cut around Gant. The Bulwer left tackle and the Bulwer captain were lunging upon him.

With a fierce spurt, Charlie crashed past the Bulwer captain. He seized the ball from the desperate Gant. He ran back. In order to keep momentarily clear of the last charging remnants of the Bulwer team, he had to step back across his own goal line. He raised the ball high, looking for a possible receiver, but was brought to earth in a furious tackle.

When he came up, he was weak. Around him, and strewn down the field in front of him, were twenty-one routed men. The scorer was marking up a two-point safety for Bulwer. Gloria ate a piece of her program. Ames kicked a hole in his hat and signaled Charles out of the game.

CHARLES was sitting on a dressing-room bench, when the team pounded into their quarters. The boys on the team were unable to speak. One or two were crying. Mr. Ames was just standing, looking at them.

"Dickenson," he said finally, in a quiet voice.

Westie interrupted. "It wasn't his fault, coach! I thought up that play. I kind of expected it would fool the other team!"

The coach paid no attention. "Dickenson," he went on, "I've heard of insane things hap-

pening in big games, but that—that spectacle—"

"Cut it out, coach," Westie whispered. "You'll have a stroke! And I've been telling you, it wasn't his fault. It—"

The coach still wasn't listening. There was a dazed look in his eyes. Just a game, Charlie thought. But you'd imagine we'd lost a war.

One of the assistant managers tiptoed into the dressing room. He surveyed the scene and shivered. Then he handed Charles a note addressed in Gloria's handwriting. Charlie opened it. The paper inside was blank. Gloria hadn't written anything.

It made Charles suddenly angry.

The coach was standing there, swallowing, unable to speak.

Charles found himself also standing. If everybody was so serious—if beating Bulwer was really a matter of life and death—if the finest girl on earth could send you the ultimate insult just because you didn't take a game seriously enough, then it was all right with Charles. He'd play their way—once. Just to show he wasn't a clown or afraid.

He heard himself begin to speak. "Look, fellows! I told you not to try any of that stuff. We've got a half left. We're trailing only by two points. We can beat those guys! We'll go out there in a few minutes. They'll laugh at us, the whole fifty thousand of 'em. The Bulwer guys will laugh." He paused. Nobody was inspired by his words. They sat with expressions like Mr. Ames's—sick and silent. "They're going to laugh hard at us," Charles went on. "And they're going to expect us to come out fighting mad, and to fall apart because we've pulled an all-time boner. All right. Listen!"

He talked rapidly. Hope came on a few faces. Presently, there were chuckles. Only Mr. Ames stayed silent until the end. Then he said, "Go ahead, men. And remember, while you're out there dying for old Purnell, I'll be sitting on the sidelines writing my resignation."

GLORIA watched the team emerge from the tunnel. She led a cheer, in a mortified, lack-luster way. The entire stadium was laughing. She sat down and gazed at the warm-up, while the band marched off the field. She felt someone sit down beside her and realized it was her father, but she did not speak, for the laughter was increasing.

And no wonder. The Purnell team was warming up—with a vengeance. The men were skipping and dancing, pirouetting and tossing flowers that were not there. Westie sighted a friend in the cheering section and threw a pass at him. The friend passed it back and Westie made a run down the field, a run that involved preposterous dodges of hypothetical opponents. The Bulwer team had stopped exercising to watch.

People—fond alumni and others—started yelling, "Stop the game!"

But the whistle blew. The kick-off went to Westie. Until he caught it, he clowned in a fabulous manner, jigging, squinting under his hand, shaking his head, waving at friends. But, once the ball was in his arms, he tucked up and pumped his knees. Once he had started to run, the rest of his team stopped its japery. Charles took the spearhead spot, smashing at an end, getting up, and blocking a tackle. Westie ran like a demon—and he was not brought down until he had crossed his own forty-five yard line.

The stands did not roar, however. They were silently and mentally disturbed.

Purnell assembled for a huddle—assembled, and then every player in the circle suddenly stood on his head. It was a weird spectacle, and the Bulwer men gazed, dropped their jaws, and roared with mirth. But the huddle of legs came right-side up. The men took their places. The ball was passed. Charles got it and hit off-tackle like a motorcycle on a hill-climb. He made eleven yards and a first down.

The teams lined up again. The Bulwer men were becoming extremely angry and even more nervous.

The next Purnell huddle was held with five men riding pick-a-back on five others. And again, Charles took the ball. Out of what seemed an insane formation, he threw a twenty-yard pass, which Westie caught and advanced six yards more. On the following play, a Bulwer tackle was off-side. The play was called back. Solemnly and politely, Charles pantomimed to the tackle where he should have been, where the play was coming through, and what he should do. The tackle was so enraged that he swung on Charles, openly. Charles ducked, and the blow knocked out the referee.

That was the end of the game insofar as Bulwer was concerned. Purnell made a touchdown—and another.

Gloria, wan and feverish, heard her father say, "Brilliant! Why, that was the most ingenious piece of applied psychology I've ever heard of!"

"It's horrible," Gloria answered.

"Horrible? Listen to the Purnell rooters! They've gone nuts. Maniac, so to speak."

"I mean," the girl replied, "horrible what Charles is doing."

"Doing? Doing! Why, my dear daughter, he's clowning those Bulwer boys out of their

minds between the plays—and during the plays he's showing the finest football ever seen in this stadium! That's what the boy is doing! He's a—a—*quadruple*-threat man!"

"And he's killing himself," she said.

"Nonsense!" her father replied.

But, later, when Charles made six line bucks in a row, the professor began to worry. When he broke through for a third touchdown and didn't get up, four Bulwer men had speared him and the rest had piled on, his worry increased. But Charles finally rose, shook his head, wiped blood from his face, and kicked off to the three-yard line. He didn't quit playing until the final whistle blew, at which time the score was Purnell 31, Bulwer 2.

After the whistle, though, he stared vaguely around and fell to the ground. They took him off the field on a stretcher and to the hospital in an ambulance.

WHEN he opened his eyes, Charles found himself looking at Gloria. He winked, and Gloria began to cry.

"Oh, Charles," she said. "I don't want you to play football again—ever! They tried to kill you! You've got a mild concussion, and about six wrenched ligaments, and you're black and blue from head to foot!"

He gazed at her. "Never play again? Why, Gloria, that was the most fun I ever had in my life!"

"Father thinks it was brilliant psychology," she continued. "The newspapers say the game will go down in history. But it doesn't matter. I know you were doing it for me! If I hadn't written that dreadful note telling you to go in and kill yourself, you'd never have done the things you did! Oh, darling, I'm so ashamed!"

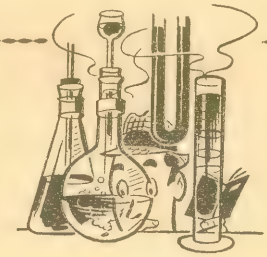
Charles did not ask, "What note?" He merely frowned and thought. Thought about the assistant manager. Undoubtedly, the young man had read Gloria's missive and decided it might have an unfavorable effect upon Charles. So he had substituted a blank sheet of paper. Assistant managers are always taking subtle and even illegal steps for the presumptive good of the team.

Charles smiled. "All right, dear," he said. "I'll never play again."

Then he learned something about another kind of psychology. Female psychology. Gloria kissed him with happy enthusiasm. Kissed him and frowned. "Of course," she said judiciously, "if next season's squad looks *too* bad, you *might* join it—and sort of take things easy all season."

THE END

KEEPING UP WITH SCIENCE



by Dr. James F. Bender

About Mother Nature: Earthquakes in the neighborhood of Boulder Dam apparently are caused by the pile-up of water in the great artificial lake thus created . . . Eighty-eight percent of a toad's food consists of insect pests; one toad consumes about ten thousand injurious insects in a three-month period.

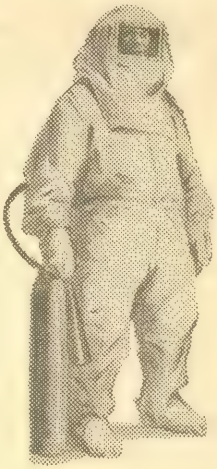
Commerce and Industry: America shipped twenty thousand tons of seeds to Russia to produce many of this year's crops . . . A half-inch rope made of nylon can support a three-ton load. Same size hemp rope supports three-fourths of a ton . . . Last year U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service received five hundred letters a day inquiring about raising rabbits commercially. Many a returning veteran is planning to set up a business raising rabbits.

Tomorrow's eating: Hamburgers via slot-machines. You drop the coin in a slot which starts the bun a-toasting and the meat a-broiling—two minutes later, the desired delight . . . Melt-proof chocolate bars to remain solid at 120 degrees Fahrenheit . . . Whole eggs frozen in bar form, allowing you to break off as many as you wish.

New inventions: Portable pocket-sized wire recorder permits interviews to be recorded on thread-thin wires which can be "played back" indefinitely; cost, from six hundred dollars to fifteen hundred dollars, at present . . . A new process for making alcohol from waste and surplus bananas in Jamaica . . . A self-service money changer to provide nickels, quarters and dimes . . . New power-operated toothbrush with gears in the handle to insure proper brushing for teeth and gums.

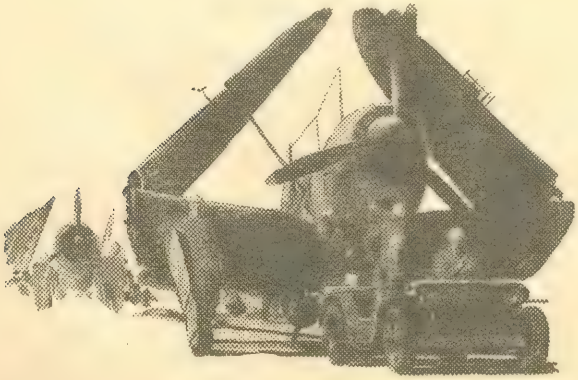
THEY LED THE

Plane directors, identified by yellow jerseys, guided taxiing planes by simple hand signals.



This man's job: to rescue personnel of burning planes.

Planes with balky engines were towed out of the way by fleets of darting jeeps, allowing parade of bombers to move one by one to the starting line.

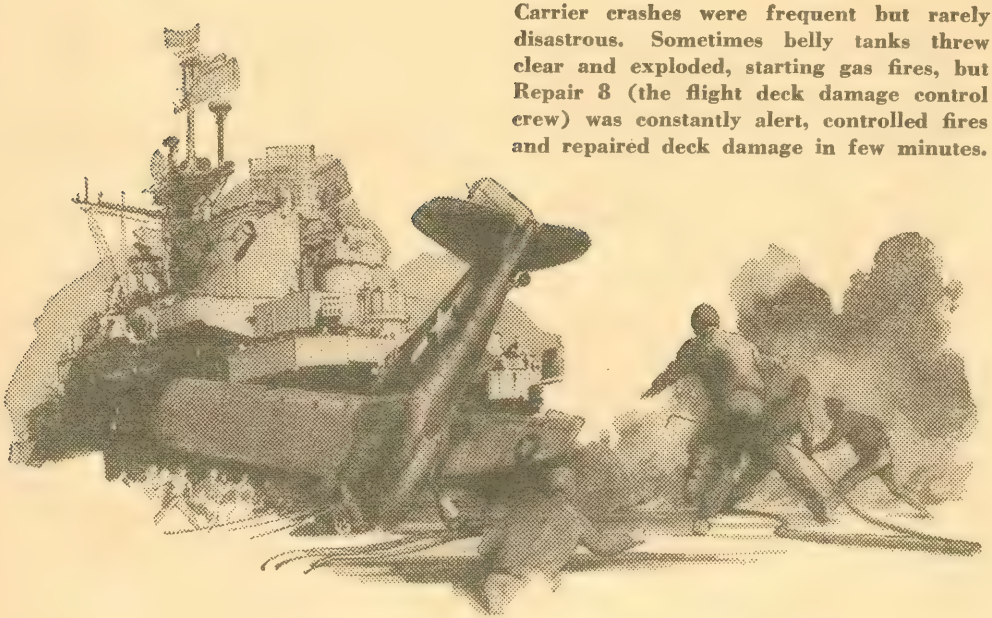


WAY TO TOKYO!

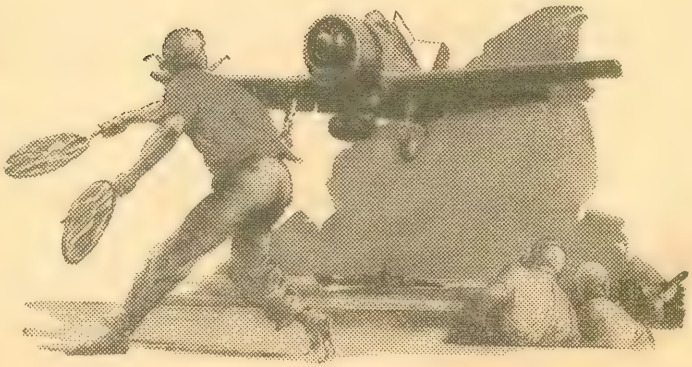
These dynamic sketches were made from life aboard the carrier Essex during the days immediately preceding the Jap surrender

by Hamilton Greene

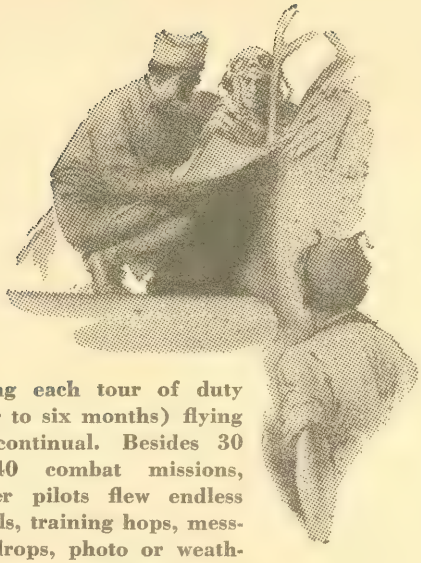
Carrier crashes were frequent but rarely disastrous. Sometimes belly tanks threw clear and exploded, starting gas fires, but Repair 8 (the flight deck damage control crew) was constantly alert, controlled fires and repaired deck damage in few minutes.



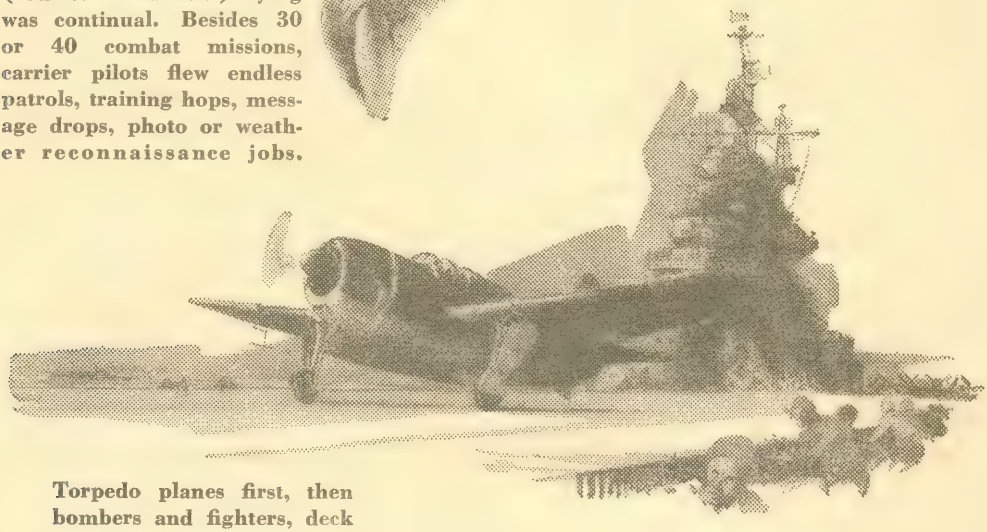
All day long, sweeps and strikes continued, endless take-offs and landings. The Landing Signal Officer was a man of quick judgment, regulating by signal flags correct speed, altitude and attitude for incoming pilots. Our man was tops; he never made an error. Here he gives quick engine cut sign to a landing Hellcat.



THE great carriers may never sail again. The job is over, but it was a job well done. It was the big fast CV, flanked by battleship, cruiser and destroyer moving step by step from the Coral Sea to Tokyo that established air supremacy over each successive



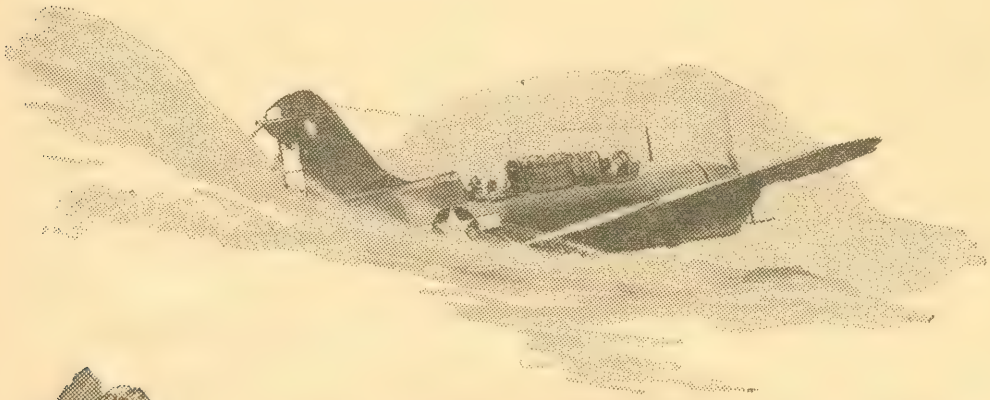
During each tour of duty (four to six months) flying was continual. Besides 30 or 40 combat missions, carrier pilots flew endless patrols, training hops, message drops, photo or weather reconnaissance jobs.



Torpedo planes first, then bombers and fighters, deck signalman sent the big Navy birds roaring off into space, twenty-five seconds apart. Above: SB2C dive bomber.

Pilots were proficient in many advanced fields of technology. In squadron ready rooms before each mission, they filled their plotting boards with data needed to solve problems of recognition, communication and navigation that lay ahead.

area in that long and painful march. And they were wonderful ships to watch. On strike days, the flight decks were moving, colorful symphonies of cooperative power, swarming with sure-footed plane handlers dodging within inches of whirling props, doing a thousand chores of traffic, arming and bombing, gassing and respotting. These four pages of sketches, drawn, during the final days of the war, aboard the U.S.S. Essex, give you some idea of it.



Pilots often had to make emergency landings, but Navy men, instinctively seeking water, crash-landed with relative safety. Planes sank rapidly but men wore mae wests, could quickly inflate rubber rafts.

Ready Room post-mortem: "There I was on my back . . ."

With last plane landed, flight deck men could relax while busy mechs made quick engine checks. . . . Such was a strike day. It was wonderful, noisy, efficient and dangerous, and I'm glad I saw it. It will never happen again.

THE Fiddler AND THE GUNMAN

by Todhunter Ballard

THEY met at my Uncle Ben's thirtieth birthday party, the girl from far-off Chile, the lawyer from New Orleans, and the fiddler from Vienna, and I suppose, as Aunt Emmaline said, it was mostly my fault. Actually the trouble came with two uninvited guests, and I was responsible for but one of them. The other, Doña Raquel, as the country called her, came with Jason Allenby.

Since the surprise party was to be held in the print shop, my aunt talked Uncle Ben into driving to Columbia. The roads were bad that spring of '52, and it was certain he'd be gone most of the afternoon.

With him out of the way, old Ike, our printer, and I cleaned the shop, moved the Ramage press and covered the type cases and composing stone with gay cloths. My aunt and Cousin Caroline hung lamps and lanterns about the long room. Benches were set about the walls and a piano had been borrowed.

After corn meal had been flung across the rough floor in an attempt to smooth it for dancing, we had a ballroom of no mean proportions. Certainly it had no equal in Red Gulch.

But a crisis arose even before the party started, for the Quince girl came to tell us that her father was down with ague, in bed, and couldn't possibly fiddle that night. A party without fiddling was unheard of, and I felt hot tears of disappointment sting the back of my eyeballs.

My aunt's face turned long and worried, although I'd never seen her cry, but suddenly I had an idea and let out a whoop. "I know a fiddler who can give Professor Quince all the aces and still beat him in a 'short card' game."

"Such language!" Ordinarily she would have boxed my ears, but her mind was filled with the party. "Who is he?"

"He's great," I said. "He learned to fiddle in Vienna."

"Oh, a foreigner." She didn't hide her disapproval.

"He's not." Excitement almost made me stutter. "He was born in Charleston. His folks sent him to Europe to study."

"Well, get him. My sakes, here it is five o'clock and the baking not done! I have to think of everything. . . ."

I raced away across the Plaza and down the narrow alleys of the Tigre section, ignoring the mud. This part of town was filled with houses which I wasn't even supposed to look at as I passed, and noisy saloons. Matt Bradley's was the noisiest; a long barn-like

Allenby said curtly, "I've seen Mr. Foster. I don't want the pleasure of meeting him."

Pretty girls were rare in Red Gulch. But duels fought over them were rarer still

room, half canvas, with two planks laid across kegs for a bar. At the rear a piano stood on a small platform, and beside the piano I saw Kenneth Foster.

I hurried forward, hoping that because of the early hour he was still sober. "Hello, Professor."

Kenneth Foster turned, his blue eyes lighting. "Why, Austin, my young friend. What brings you into this den of cutthroats and thieves?" He wasn't drunk and I breathed deeply in relief.

"We're in trouble." I explained how Professor Quince had let us down by having a chill. "Quince gets fifteen dollars the evening," I added. "You play better than he does, but I'm not sure my aunt will pay higher. She's kind of close."

He smiled. "Money isn't as important as a favor to a friend, but will your aunt want a saloon entertainer playing for her guests?"

I was pretty certain she wouldn't, but I said hurriedly, "She doesn't have to know, if you could just keep sober. . . ."

His eyes got a strange, faraway look. "Why, yes, I think that could be arranged for one evening. When shall I come?"

I trusted him, but the longer he stayed at Bradley's the more chance he had to drink. "Could you come with me now?"

He understood. He had a quick way of getting things, as if he could read your mind. He reached over and picked up the battered fiddle case and rose to follow. "So be it."

THE party was a real surprise for my uncle, who came in tired and mud-caked. For an instant he was dismayed as he saw the crowded room, then his wide smile broke out and he went around shaking hands with the guests as if he hadn't seen them in months.

I kept out of his way, knowing he would

recognize Kenneth Foster and ask questions. Ed Sours at the piano seemed to be inspired by Foster's fiddling, and we had never heard such music in Red Gulch. The crowd reacted to it, dancing and laughing.

But suddenly the gaiety stilled and the musicians, sensing something out of the ordinary, ceased to play. Looking toward the door, I saw that Jason Allenby had come in. Tall and dark and elegantly dressed as always—the perfect figure of a gentleman, my aunt was wont to say—he was a lawyer from the South who had been in Red Gulch three months. A marked man, a man who would go far, was my uncle's verdict, for his admirers weren't limited to women. Despite his fancy clothes and educated ways, he could take care of himself.

Certainly he was welcome at our party. It was his companion whose presence had caused the sudden silence. She was small and dark, and her eyes were big and, at the moment, soft, though they could flash upon occasion. Her dress was black silk, her head covered by a kind of veil over a big comb.

"WHO is she?" Kenneth Foster had moved to my side. There was a note in his soft voice I'd never heard there before.

"Doña Raquel," I said. "She runs the Death's Head mine, beyond the Stanislaus."

"And why are they treating her like a leper?"

"Well," I said, "she wears breeches and carries a rifle across her saddle."

"What's wrong with that?"

I didn't know exactly. I was too young for the shades of human behavior to be entirely comprehensible. "Well," I said, uncertainly, "she runs the mine with peons and keeps them chained. . . ."

He was impatient. "Where does she come from? Who is she?"

"From Chile," I said. "Her father, Don Ricardo, came here a year ago and brought the peons with him. He called the mine Mesa del Oro, but there's a rock at the top which looks like a skull. Everyone else calls it the Death's Head."

"Where's her father now?"

"Dead these six months," I said. "A bunch of gamblers tried to jump the mine. He fought them off but got killed in the skirmish. People thought the girl would go away, but she put on pants and ran things. They say she uses a whip on her slaves."

"She's just a child." He was speaking to himself. "What's she doing with that slicker Allenby?"

"He's her lawyer," I explained. "There's a commission from Washington City, come out to rule on land grants. Don Ricardo bought Death's Head Hill from the Indians, but some of the mining companies say it isn't legal. They're trying to throw her out."

"You know her?" Foster was still watching the girl.

"Sure," I said. "I went with Uncle Ben to get the story on this commission business. The mine's amazing. They dig the ore with little picks, not even using powder, and carry it up long ladders in wicker baskets to the stone arrestas, where it's ground and quicksilver added to pick out the gold."

"And she uses whips?"

"I didn't see her," I admitted. "The peons love her."

"She's beautiful," he said. "I've never seen anything so exquisite anywhere."

I turned to look at the girl. If Jason Allenby sensed the hostility in the room, he gave no sign. He advanced to bow before my aunt. "Dear lady," he said in a tone he might have used to flatter a queen, "may I present my friend, Señorita Alvarado."

The girl curtsied. "You are kind to invite me to your party." Her voice was soft and warm and carried across the stillness.

My aunt started. She most certainly had not invited Doña Raquel, but it was obvious that the girl thought she'd been asked. Aunt Emmaline was a woman of parts. She shot an accusing glance at Jason Allenby, then smiled at the girl. "It was nice of you to come. You know my husband? Ben, introduce her to the other guests."

I was proud of Uncle Ben. Jason Allenby could not have offered his arm with more grace, nor carried off the situation with more ease.

Kenneth Foster's eyes were on the girl as he played, and it seemed that his music was especially for her. Finally my uncle, now calling the reels, signaled a halt, waving everyone toward the food tables at the rear.

Suddenly across the din of conversation, the strains of the fiddle came strong and sharply commanding. Foster's eyes were closed, the fiddle tucked lovingly under his chin. He seemed to be playing from the sheer love of it. Most of the crowd gave little attention, but someone at my elbow said in a quiet voice, "It's wonderful. Who is he?" and I turned to find Doña Raquel at my side.

She was so small that our heads were almost level, and in her black lace she looked like a little doll. "That's Kenneth Foster," I told her. "A friend of mine."

"What is it he plays?"

I didn't know. "Let's ask him," I said, turning toward the stand. As I turned I saw Jason Allenby watching us and had a pre-

sentiment of trouble, but it was too late to turn back.

Still playing, Foster was totally unconscious of our presence, and I would have spoken, but Doña Raquel pressed a small finger against my lips and we remained silent until the last note died and Foster opened his eyes.

"Marvelous, *señor*," she said. "I have heard nothing like it ever. The name, if you please?"

"It is called the 'Tauberl-Walzer,'" he said. "Johann Strauss wrote it."

"This Strauss, you knew him?"

"I played for him," Kenneth Foster said, soberly. "He was the master, the great one. He died three years ago."

"So then you came to seek the gold?"

"For that and other reasons." His tone was brusque. Then, as if realizing he'd been rude, he switched to Spanish and the delighted girl was answering him, laughing like a child when Jason Allenby came up.

He bowed sharply to Foster, refusing to acknowledge him by speaking, then said to the girl, "Your supper is waiting, my dear. So is your hostess."

She tried to introduce the fiddler but Allenby said curtly, "I've seen Mr. Foster. I don't want the pleasure of meeting him."

Foster's thin cheeks flushed and the girl hurriedly took Allenby's arm, leading him away.

I offered the fiddler a bit of advice. "He's a bad man," I said. "He had to leave New Orleans for killing half a dozen men in duels."

Foster's eyes were on the girls. "She's marvelous."

"Well," I said, "he's a crack shot and I wouldn't want him to think *I* was after his girl."

Foster looked at me and suddenly he smiled. "Austin, you're a wise lad. You put things into words and make a man look at them. Do you think a drunkard would stand a chance with Doña Raquel?"

"You don't have to drink, do you?"

"Of course I don't." He sounded as if he was making a great discovery. "You have an honest mind. You come to a problem and solve it before you go on. Never pass a problem by, Austin. It returns to haunt you in the night."

I didn't know what he meant, but I knew he was smart, and his young face looked as taut as one of his fiddle strings. "It may be simple to stop drinking," I said, "but it won't be easy to get rid of Jason Allenby. He's sharp, and educated, and besides, he knows how to shoot."

Foster wasn't listening. "How to see her again? I can't just ride out to the mine and tell her, 'Behold, ma'am, a reformed drunkard who loves you.'"

I didn't know how he'd manage to see her, so I wandered away before he could ask my advice. Beside the sandwich table I heard Allenby say in a level, furious voice, "I tell you, the man's nothing but a drunkard. I can't understand Ben Garner allowing him in the same room with decent women. A saloon entertainer!"

I wanted to protest, but I was a little afraid of Jason Allenby. I felt that he would win, that Kenneth Foster had no chance.

BUT I counted without the girl. She rode into town three days later, followed by a half dozen of her Indians, and pulled up before the print shop as I was washing the window. She was wearing breeches again, a black leather jacket over a white shirt and a black hat with little tassels making a ring around the brim.

"Señor Austin," she said, steadying her skittish horse with a small resolute hand, "I give a fiesta for my men, and we need a fiddler."

"I could get Professor Quince," I offered, knowing that wasn't what she wanted at all.

She shook her head. "He is not good enough, I fear. My men deserve the best. That other one, who played the pretty waltz."

"Oh, you mean Kenneth Foster? I'm not sure he'll come."

"Please." She reached down, putting a small gloved hand on my shoulder. "You are his friend. You will persuade him for me."

When she looked at me I'd have promised anything. "I'll try," I said.

"And you will come. He will feel more easy if his friend is there."

I knew my aunt would never let me go, but suddenly it was important that I see that party. "I'll be there," I promised rashly.

She swung her horse, pleased as a child, and dashed down the muddy street, her men strung out behind her. I went in search of Foster, finding him in the back room of Wickup's Harness Shop.

After the party, he had not returned to Bradley's, but instead had talked Ned Wickup into taking him on as a helper. The shop was next to the Rose Building, a two-story frame affair where Jason Allenby had his office—a thing I should have remembered.

But I was so excited that I burst in, shouting to Foster that his worries were over, that Doña Raquel had invited him to a fiesta, and that I was included in the invitation. He was almost as excited as I, but he had himself under better control. "Does your aunt know you are going with me?"

I hedged on that one. "I think that she liked Doña Raquel, and I'll be safe at the mine. I've already seen Ward. He'll loan us old Kate and a buggy."

Foster smiled, but he didn't object when I told him to get the buggy and meet me at the end of Gold Street, right after dark. I wasn't there when Jason Allenby issued his warning to stay away from the mine. I didn't know anything about it until Doña Raquel told me.

WE WERE very late climbing the steep hill from the Stanislaus to the mine village. It was built like a fort, with walls of logs and earth.

Kenneth Foster was impressed. "This is hers," he said under his breath, "all hers, and I have nothing at all."

"Sure it's hers, and the richest mine in the hills. No wonder they keep trying to steal it."

"And no one to help her." He was still speaking very low. "A child, all alone in a foreign land."

Personally, I thought she was managing pretty well by herself. "But there's Jason Allenby," I reminded him. "He's a smart lawyer and he knows all about land commission cases."

"That's what I'm afraid of," Foster said. "Mr. Allenby knows too many tricks. He's too sharp. I think she'd be safer alone."

"My aunt says he's going to marry her," I added. "She thinks it's a good match, thinks it would make Doña Raquel respectable."

He snorted and was silent as we drove in. There was an armed man at the gate, but inside, everyone had given himself over to the party. Peon musicians were playing instruments kind of like guitars, and shaking little dry gourds so that the seeds rattled.

Foster spoke Spanish and in five minutes knew everyone in the place. They all seemed friendly, which surprised me, for they appeared sullen on the Red Gulch streets and the town regarded them with suspicion. Here they were different, and a whole crowd of boys and girls about my own age stuffed me with food until I could hardly move. . . .

Doña Raquel was showing the mine to Foster when Jason Allenby came through the gate. I sensed trouble from the very way he walked. He spotted me and strode forward.

"Where's Señorita Alavarado? Where's Foster?"

I was scared and said I didn't know.

"Don't lie to me." His tone was like a whiplash and it made me mad, but just then Foster appeared, helping Doña Raquel up one of the long ladders from the ore pits.

Jason Allenby started toward them and the intensity of his voice carried above the beat of the music. "May I talk to you alone, Mr. Foster?"

From the distance I couldn't hear the fiddler's reply, but they turned and walked together toward the side of the compound.

Fearful of trouble, I stole to Doña Raquel's side. "What are they going to do?"

She hardly glanced at me. Her eyes were on the shadowy figures and her voice was deep with worry. "I don't know. Allenby warned Kenneth not to come here."

"How did he know we were coming?"

"I guess he heard you talking to Kenneth. He warned him, but Kenneth only laughed. One of my men was on the street and heard."

"But what right had he?"

"Men like Jason take things without right," she said, "because they're ruthless and—"

"Then you aren't going to marry Allenby?" I was surprised after what my aunt had said.

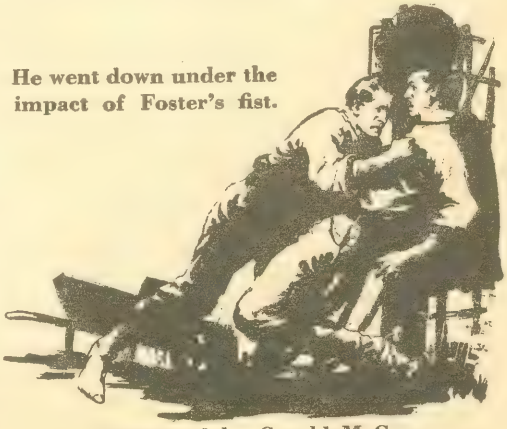
"I'm afraid of him"—her voice was low—"and I think I hate him. I know I will if he kills my fiddler, but how to stop him?"

"You could have your Indians throw him off the cliff," I told her. "It's two thousand feet down to the Stanislaus."

For an instant she smiled. "You are very direct, my little friend, but men must settle their problems themselves. They would not forgive it if a woman interfered."

"Why don't you two go away?" I suggested. "You could take fast horses and be gone before Jason knew. Of course, you'd lose the mine and—"

"For myself, the mine means nothing." She sounded sad. "Nothing but unhappiness has come of it, but I can't abandon it because these mozos who work with me each has a small part. That was the agreement when they left their homes to follow father. If I



He went down under the impact of Foster's fist.

Illustrated by Gerald McCann

leave they will lose all, and I dare not offend Señor Allenby. He has power with this land commission. A word from him and they would rule against us. Yet there must be some way."

Suddenly there was a commotion at the far side of the compound, and I saw Allenby go down under the impact of Foster's fist.

We all ran forward, Doña Raquel, the Indians and I. Foster was standing above the prone man, unconscious of our presence. "Get up," he said. "Get up!"

Jason Allenby rose slowly. The red mark left by Foster's knuckles showed plainly on the line of his jaw. His face was very white, his eyes glittering, his lips tight-pressed.

"I'm not a saloon brawler"—his words were clipped "—but my friends will call on you in the morning." He turned and strode toward the gate. He did not hurry, although he must have sensed the crowd's hostility. Whatever else he was, Jason Allenby was not afraid.

Terribly embarrassed, Foster excused himself as soon as possible on the plea that he had to get me home. I noticed that Doña Raquel did not protest our departure. She said little but I knew by her eyes she was upset.

Swinging home behind old Kate, I asked, "What happened?"

"He said something I didn't like."

"About Doña Raquel," I guessed. "Can you shoot?"

"I don't know," he said. "I never tried."

I looked at him in horror. "But Allenby can. He's a trained duelist. He can't miss."

His face got tense and savage. "I don't care—let him kill me. I won't run away again. A man can run away once, Austin, but if he does it a second time, he's a coward, and I'm not a coward. I won't be a coward."

I didn't know what he was talking about and said so. He took a long time to answer. "There was another girl, once, back in Vienna —another man and another duel. He challenged me and I wouldn't fight. I didn't believe in taking human life. The whole town laughed and called me a coward, and the girl laughed, so . . . I came out here."

"Doña Raquel won't laugh," I said. "Doña Raquel won't want you killed. She's swell."

He shook his head. "This time I can't run." He sounded grim. "This time it's better to be killed than to run. I've learned that, learned that laughter can be a cruel thing. I want people's respect. If I can't have it, I'd better be dead. I keep remembering that cruel laughter. I started drinking to forget. A man doesn't like to appear a fool, even to his enemies."

I repeated his words to Doña Raquel the next evening. We were standing out behind the print shop in the darkness. It had been an exciting day. The town buzzed with the news of the quarrel, for Frank Howe and Jim Larabee had waited on Kenneth Foster with the formal challenge.

Foster asked Ned Wickup and old Ike, our printer, to serve for him, and it was rumored that the meeting was set for the following morning, though the place was a dead secret since Sheriff Work had issued an ultimatum that he would have no duels within his jurisdiction.

The day had belonged to Jason Allenby. Everywhere he went he was feted as if he were already the winner, and men placed bets, not on the outcome, but on whether Allenby's bullet would reach Foster's heart or how far it would miss. Allenby himself swaggered a little. "The world has too many fiddlers," I heard him say. "Tomorrow there will be one less."

I repeated all this to Doña Raquel. I told her about the girl in Vienna and how she'd laughed.

"We've go to do something, Austin," she said. "We can't let him go out there and be slaughtered."

"He'd rather that than be laughed at."

"I wonder," she said, "if all men feel the same way?"

We talked for a long time. Afterwards I sought out old Ike. He knew where the meeting would take place, and I didn't mean to miss the duel. It was the first one I'd ever had a chance to see.

THE sun hadn't come up over the Sierra peaks and there was heavy ground fog in the hollows when I reached the dueling place. for several minutes I thought Ike had sent me to the wrong spot, then I heard the creak of harness and saw old Kate pull one of Ward's carriages into sight. I watched Ike and Ned Wickup get out, followed by Kenneth Foster. He was bare-headed and his yellow hair looked handsome in the first rays of the mounting sun.

He looked very young, but composed and unworried. I couldn't understand this since I hadn't slept a wink all night. Then a second carriage drew up, bringing the doctor, Allenby and his two seconds. They climbed out and the four seconds shook hands gravely as if they'd never met before.

When the mahogany box was produced it was all I could do to stay in my place of concealment, for I guessed that it held Allenby's famous dueling pistols and I longed to see them. They were supposed to be inlaid with silver and beautifully balanced. The four seconds gathered around, loading them.

They were cap and ball and supposed to be as accurate as any pistol made.

Allenby stood aside, his arms folded, aloof. The doctor fussed about, getting his little bag open and his tools laid out, ready for business. The ground was examined, the distance checked and final instructions given. I didn't know my heart was so big. It seemed to have come up right into my mouth.

As Foster stood, waiting to start pacing, I'm certain that in his own mind he knew it was to be his last walk, but aside from an unaccustomed straightness of his shoulders, he gave no sign of nervousness. He might have run away once, but he was not running today. Evidently the other girl hadn't meant enough. Doña Raquel did.

They stood back to back, and as the command was given they started a slow, measured tread as if both considered each step before taking it.

Ned Wickup's strained voice said: "One."

Both men halted.

"Two."

They turned, facing each other.

"Three."

Kenneth Foster's pistol had been hanging at his side. He raised it perhaps a foot and fired directly into the ground. I heard someone swear in surprise, but the action did not disconcert Allenby. Slowly, deliberately, he brought his weapon up, his thin lips twisted into a tiny, cynical smile. If I've ever seen murder in a man's face I saw it then.

He steadied his pistol, perfectly confident. I had time to glance at Kenneth Foster. He was motionless and straight, the pistol still hanging loosely from his fingers, and his face was serene.

The explosion of Allenby's gun startled me. It had been so long in coming that I was unprepared. He stood a full instant after the gun went off, still holding it level, the smile fixed on his face. Slowly it faded, leaving his lips hard and thin, and a look of incredulity spread across his features as he stared at Kenneth Foster, standing still and straight, and untouched.

LAUGHTER sounded on the still morning air, sharp and cutting. It was one of Foster's seconds, and he was joined and instant later by the others.

Jason Allenby looked at them. He was quick and smart and, being a good lawyer, knew men and their reactions. He stared for an instant, an inner rage making his eyes smoke, then he turned, his back straight as a ramrod, his walk perfect, as he stalked to the carriage, climbed in and turned the horses. There was something about the man that carried dignity even in defeat, and I watched him drive over the hill, fearful to move until he had gone.

Then I ran forward to where the men surrounded Kenneth Foster, shaking his hand. I heard the doctor say in an amazed voice, "He missed! The best shot in California, and he missed!"

The town thought it pretty funny, and they couldn't forget Jason Allenby had bragged that he was going to kill the fiddler. A wave of laughter swept the Plaza and out Gold Street. In the dives of the Tigre section, men relived the duel over their drinks and went into gales of laughter over the "miss."

"The best shot in California," I heard one bearded miner say. "Heaven help California."

Jason Allenby heard him also, and he brushed past me, confronting the bearded man. "Maybe you'd like to see if I could miss you." His tone was soft, but it seemed to hiss a little.

A week before, the bearded man would have quailed, but now he threw back his head and roared. "Get a shotgun," he told the bartender. "Maybe Mister Allenby could hit something with that."

I expected Jason Allenby to slash him across the face. He didn't. He didn't move. His skin was like white parchment across his cheekbones as he turned and stalked to the hotel. I followed, keeping well in the background. I sensed that he wasn't afraid of the men, that he could kill and would kill any one of them. But he was too smart. He knew that once a man has lost the respect of his fellows, he cannot get it back.

In his own way Jason Allenby was a gambler, but he was a sure-thing player. When the odds were stacked against him, he did not sit in the game. And he realized that the odds were against him now, that it was smarter to pull out.

I heard him tell Perks, the hotel man, to send a boy up for his bags. I watched him drive away, and then I went looking for Kenneth Foster.

"You don't have to worry," I told him as he and I started to drive out toward the mine. "Allenby's gone, bag and baggage. He won't be around to trouble you or to spoil Doña Raquel's case with the land commission."

Foster listened as I explained what I'd seen, then said in a voice which was still wondering, "But how did he happen to miss me? He could shoot—I've seen him break a wine glass at that distance."

"With a bullet," I said.

Kenneth Foster pulled the plodding horse abruptly to a stop and turned to face me. "Austin, there's something more than shows

They stood back to back. Wick-up's strained voice said: "One."

on the surface here. You were at the duel. You did something."

I realized I'd talked too much, as usual. "Why, I didn't do much," I said. "Old Ike and I didn't hold with duels, especially when one of the men had never learned to shoot, so old Ike, who knew Allenby's seconds, pointed out that it would be bad for Red Gulch's good name to allow a legalized murder."

"And there were no bullets put in the guns," he guessed suddenly. "Nothing but wadding."

I nodded. "But don't worry. The seconds will never tell the story. That's what they were laughing at, right after the duel. The town was taken in by Allenby, and a little afraid of him, but they never really liked him. And we knew he was very proud, and proud men can't stand to be laughed at. We thought he might leave, if it seemed that he wasn't as good a shot as he boasted."

"So you planned that part, too. You guessed he might leave rather than face the jeers. I suppose none of you gave the crowd the idea of jeering?"

"Well"—I squirmed—"old Ike did kind of mention it to a few people, how Allenby wasn't quite the ring-tailed grizzly he pretended to be."

He put an arm around my shoulders as the horse crossed the river and started up the steep hill which led to the mine gate. "Thank you, Austin. It seems I owe you everything. But one more favor. Perhaps you need not tell Doña Raquel all that you've told me. I'm not much of a hero, and I fear I never will be. Even this morning I fired into the ground, unable to bring myself to attempt killing a man, but women are more happy when they can glamorize their husbands. Therefore, if she thinks—"

"I see no reason to tell her," I said, and hoped that she would never show him the two bullets which old Ike had palmed at the dueling ground and given her as souvenirs. I didn't think she would—she'd already said that a man would never forgive a woman for interfering. With me it was different—Kenneth Foster wouldn't resent my interference. But her plan had worked so perfectly that it seemed a shame for her not to get the credit, since she, not Ike, had planned it all.

But as it was, I think she got enough. She was rid of Allenby, and judging by the look on her face as she met us at the mine gate, she was content. I've never seen a happier girl in my life.

THE END

THE REFORMATION OF Pablo Suarez

by Ada D. Finn

DUE to his lifelong avoidance of the more enduring aspects of romance, Pablo Suarez was perhaps the last man in Mexico City to fall under the spell of Camelia's dazzling charm. If he frequented her father's cantina, it was because the enchiladas were excellent. And even if one failed to make a profitable business contact, there was still a chance that some not too discriminating soul would stand him a drink.

With this in mind, he entered the Escambron with its rusted iron gate, its filigreed balcony hidden in flowering creepers, and its unpainted door hanging by one hinge. Outwardly it was just another hole-in-the-wall in an unimportant back street of dirty shops. But inside, the tile floors were coolly matted and the ceilings were arched high and tinted a tranquil green.

Here one was able to breathe normally again.

Here, in whispers, had passed the only cool decisions in four years of public hysteria. But this Pablo ignored as pointedly as he did the fact that there was a global war in progress. His mind, as usual, was working to capacity on sensitive matters connected with his profession, smuggling. And it was his considered opinion that the enhanced vigilance of the police, unduly agitated about boundary security, constituted a far greater menace to his way of life than ever had Germany or Japan, which were far-away places of slight importance.

Laughter and the tinkle of glasses chipped the solid hum of conversation. Camelia swayed gracefully between the tables, her stiff striped skirt making a sound like a whisper. With a pleasant sense of excitement, Pablo beckoned to her.

She came over directly,

Pablo didn't breathe as he edged toward the window of the shack.

Few things—save the lushly lovely Camelia—could have brought Pablo Suarez to the painful degradation of honest toil

bringing the tequila she always gave him on the house. In her molded yellow bodice, and with that silky fall of magnificent hair about her shoulders, she was the very portrait of temptation.

"The police have been here having *refrescos* and making inquiries about you," she murmured, eyeing his strong, dark face with a hint of disapproval.

"Regarding what?" asked Pablo.

"A sapphire bracelet is missing from the San Potosí."

"So I have heard. Be at peace," he told her with soft courtesy. It pleased his virile vanity to reassure anxious women. "I am not involved."

"That does not suffice!" she burst out sharply. "Sacred heart! That they connect your name with wickedness and corruption is where my uneasiness lies! That they dare—"

"Suspicion is the business of the law," Pablo pointed out with Mexican resignation, when she had exhausted her vocabulary of abuse. He watched her bosom heaving with emotion under its gauzy covering, and his pulses quickened. "When you are angry, little one, you are the very thunder and lightning and storm of all the universe to blast a man's heart out of his keeping."

The rage passed from her face. "It may be a stupidity, but I love you, *querido*. Against my better judgment and certainly without the approval of my heart."

Pablo stared at her in shocked unbelief.

"Bachelors of long standing sometimes make the best husband material," she mused, long lashes veiling an expression that in eyes less lovely might have been considered calculating.

"*Quién sabe?*" temperately countered Pablo. "It is a great risk—a man grows accustomed to his freedom . . ."

Camelia gave him a quick flooding smile.

"You will like it. That I will see to," she predicted confidently. "But I would not consider entering marriage with the fear of jail hanging over us."

"The shadow of the law is everywhere." Pablo shrugged.

"Only if you have reason to fear the law. It is of no concern to people in respectable work."

"We are as we are," sighed Pablo philosophically.

She eyed him provocatively. "*I* can change you."

"Of that I have no doubt." He ran an appreciative eye over her luscious curves, then asked wistfully, "You could not be content just to love me and to ignore such of my views as offend you?"

"Not so long as you live by them." She drew a pack of villainous black cigarettes from her blouse and put one between her lips.

Pablo bent toward her with a light.

"I have some money. My mother left it to me," said Camelia, her head held defensively high. "Two hundred pesos."

"That is a sizeable sum," murmured Pablo with respect.

"*Pues*, it is only that I mention it as a means to help you to a better job. It would buy you a small shop."

Pablo was profoundly touched. "And you would give it to me?"

"If it will help insure our happiness."

"Then I can do no less than accept," he decided, outwardly calm. Inwardly, he was torn between satisfaction at a business deal shrewdly consummated, and a severe griping sensation in his midsection. "We will retire to a life of respectability—after," he amended scrupulously, "one last financial achievement."

"Money is of no import." Camelia smoothed his suit of tropical drill, once white. "If you will only give up crime you do not have to mention it again."

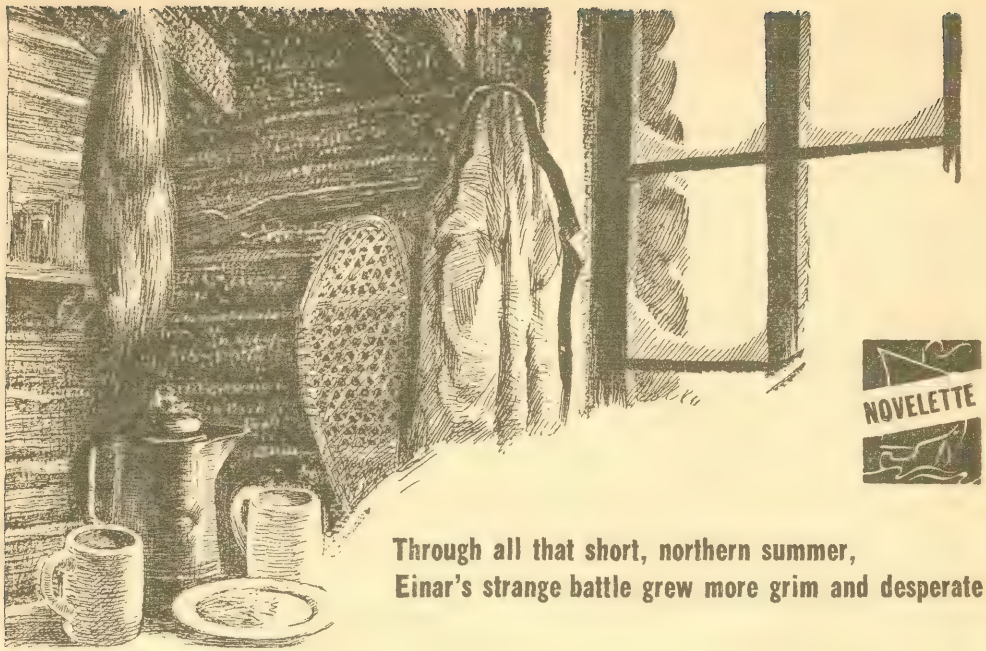
"Oh, yes I do," contradicted Pablo. "You will be surprised how I do." He rose with dignity and picked up his wide sombrero, mottled by long exposure to equatorial sun and rain. "Honor demands that I bring to our union a sum of equal magnitude. Now, with your permission, I will say good-bye—not to return until I have made a like amount."

"Honestly," stipulated Camelia with unpleasant distinctness. But all the warmth and richness of her nature illumined her face, softening the blow.

"That poses an intricate problem. But"—Pablo bowed gallantly from the waist—"your wish is my command. *Adios*."

OUTSIDE, the sun was a red-hot branding iron on the top of his head. It cooked the tar in the road till it came up in hard black strips on the wheels of the ox-carts rumbling past. In a more receptive mood, he might have responded to the picturesqueness of the huddled pigeon-colored roofs, the cobalt sea at the end of the shadow-latticed streets that smelled of seaweed and fish and a hundred garlic suppers. But tonight it aroused in him only distaste. Why was it that in emotional situations women lost all sense of proportion? Why couldn't they be realists like men, who understood the insurmountable difficulties attendant upon making an honest living in a world run by law courts and statutes?

A squat swarthy figure in a wide sombrero



Through all that short, northern summer, Einar's strange battle grew more grim and desperate

"I only hope I don't get blamed if you do this crazy thing," said Bjorn, as he held up a small, brightly colored packet.

tling to speak to a fellow man, and hear spoken words from lips and a voice like his own.

He led the animals out of the barn. Suddenly he remembered that he had forgotten to put on his outer parka, with the hood of wolf fur about the throat. Only the carefully kneaded and chewed leather underjacket, with its white trimming and mink cuffs, protected him from the faint powder of snow. It must really be warming up, though he was so used to the cold that he sometimes felt as if the winds had crawled into his skin and veins.

The animals shook off the cold and the dark, as he brushed their shaggy coats. It was good to keep them working, and get them in trim for the trip to North Fiord. He decided to cover ten miles of snow, visiting his traps and snares. With nine more skins, he'd have beaten his own record, and then he'd drive back again through the snapping wind, perhaps accompanied by the crackling violets and blues of the Northern Lights.

He harnessed the reindeer to the sleigh, and started out across the wind-swept tundra. He looked back and could faintly see the outline of his turf-thatched hut, banked solid on the northern side by snow. He always kept a light in the window for himself, but now, perhaps because the darkness was less thick, he could hardly see the gleam from the blubber bowl with its floating wick. Soon he wouldn't need the light at all.

When he hit the first rise, beyond the house, he looked out over the tundra and wondered what day he would see a speck, as his neighbor, Hjalmar, would come with his old woman. He had always promised to make the long trek with them, to North Fiord, but, somehow, he felt that this time he would go alone. He would sooner be by himself, to make his plans for the thousandth time, to think of the day when he would meet Gina, and they would go together to the store, and he'd use some of the money from his furs to buy her red cloth and needles and the rock candy she liked, and to plan with her family when she would come to live with him.

It was hard to believe that he hadn't seen Gina for nine months, for every morning when he got up he talked to her picture, and every night before he went to sleep he thought of the time she would join him and end the solitude of his living. He hoped, by careful budgeting, to marry her in two years.

Since his father had died tragically and left him deep in debt, he had worked hard and lived alone, planning for the time when Gina would come to him, and live in his simple house. He must have a cow, and money to build and furnish the new thatched bedroom which any self-respecting Norwegian would

need, besides his single big room, when a girl like Gina came to be his wife.

He knew that Gina's parents weren't eager for her to marry him. After all, they lived near the town of North Fiord, they were town people, while he was away out here in the frozen wilderness, partly because his father had chosen this spot, and also because it seemed to him the one place in the world that was home and beauty; a wind-swept space that was his own. Moreover, it was the best and most untouched trapping land in the world. That he knew. . . .

It took a keen eye to find the traps under the new powdering of snow, but Einar knew his territory like every sod brick in his house. He found his game, most of it frozen—four mink pelts, and one ermine—and he knew this would be the best season he had ever had.

When he got back, and had bedded down the reindeer, he read by the notches in the stone oil lamp that five hours had passed.

He made another X on his calendar. Today was the fourteenth day of May. Gina would be sewing her white fur parka, ready for his purchase of red lining material. He could see her laughing, laughing because she knew it would be her wedding parka.

But how could he bring back Gina and her gear and the cow, with all the fodder it would need, on foot for a hundred miles in the brief summer? And, though his cache was good, better than ever before, and he was out of debt, he knew the cow would cost most of his money, and he saw no possible way to buy the things he needed to provide for a wife. Somehow that stuck in his mind—that he had to have a cow, with food for it to eat. This was his pledge to Gina and her parents that he could support her properly and make a good home for her.

He looked at her picture, which was set on the pine table next to his bed. Her blue, blue eyes were almost hidden in her high Slavic cheeks, as she smiled into the camera with infectious good humor. Einar found himself smiling, too, as he looked at her, with the neat yellow braids folded across her head. She was always neat as a mink, that girl, as a golden mink, but he'd like to see her hair unplaited and spread upon his pillow, so he could put his fingers through it, and kiss her, as he held her fast with her own hair.

The more he thought about her, the more he knew he could not wait two more years for Gina. He needed her so much. Besides, there was something else. Supposing her family tried to force her into a marriage with a rich man? He knew she was good and loved him, but she was an obedient daughter and might do what her family wanted.

He wished he had a dog to talk to. He'd buy her a puppy when she came. His own dog had been with his father when he was killed in an unexpected freshet two years before. The old man, tough and lean as leather, had been in the advance sled, taking the greatest fur load of years to North Fiord. Einar's dog had been running with him, trotting back and forth from one sled to another. Suddenly the forward sled, laden with pelts, his father and the dog, had all crashed through the ice, undermined by the spring thaw, and disappeared into the deep water below. Einar had managed to halt his terrified reindeer, but there was nothing he could do. In a moment they were gone as if they had never been, and the boy stood there alone, trembling, sick, listening to the booming roar of the ice, like thunder underfoot.

Later, Einar had struggled on alone to North Fiord and stood dazed and ill at the door of the trading post. A few friends saw him and spoke to him, but he wandered away with blank terror in his eyes. Finally, Gina had come and taken his hand.

"Einar," she said, "it's better told."

So he told her, and she had aided him to get credit from the store, though his pelts were lost, and she had comforted his grief. That had been the beginning of his love for her, and the beginning of his servitude and endless work, in order to bring her back with him one day to share the life he wrested from the darkness and cold.

II

NIGHT and day were alike.

But Einar marked them, while the hours burned by and the perpetual northern gloom slowly whitened into an even gray, pearly and translucent, and the tundra moss pushed up mauve and green, as the black earth began to show its ribs.

One day he climbed the snowbank of his northern roof wall to see the dark masses of migrating caribou as they drifted through the snow patches, on their way across the plateau.

They were far away, moving slowly. If it had been earlier, he would have made a kill, but a haunch of venison still hung frozen on an outdoor beam; he had flour and bacon, and even a little sugar for his cannister of coffee. This would be enough for him, for soon he'd be going south to trade his pelts at the store for new supplies and money. . . .

Then Hjalmar, his neighbor, and Hjalmar's wife came. They lived across the Blue Mountains, fifty miles eastward. On Hjalmar's sled was a full pack, laced with canvas and thong,

and the old woman got stiffly down from it to sit by the fire and eat the meal Einar prepared and drink his hot, strong coffee.

"My teeth hurt," she grumbled.

"We're going to have her teeth pulled and buy some new ones," said the old man, helping himself too liberally, Einar thought, to the sugar. "Then she won't have anything to grumble about."

"No!" said the old woman. "How can I chew my sewing without my teeth?"

"When I marry Gina," said Einar, "I'm going to hire a Lapp woman to chew the leather. I'm not going to let my wife spoil her teeth."

"Don't spoil her!" said Hjalmar.

"He'll never learn how to spoil women from you," the old woman complained. "Einar, are you coming with us?"

"No, I'm staying a bit longer," said Einar. He suddenly decided that he didn't want to make the long trip with these sour old people. He'd rather travel alone, smoothly, with his four reindeer. What's more, they'd both be eating his food all the way on the trip.

"I'm staying longer," he said, "because I think Bjorn is coming by here soon. He said last fall that he would."

"Why?" asked Hjalmar. "Surely you don't believe in all the stuff he peddles. I wouldn't spend a *krone* on it."

"There might be something new," said Einar, "something to make life easier."

"Nonsense," said Hjalmar. "Life is supposed to be hard, so just forget that."

"No," said Einar. "I said I'd wait."

They left without much thanks for the meal or the big piled spoonfuls of sugar.

"Lucky it's fine," Einar thought, as he watched them drive away. "If they'd stayed longer, they'd have eaten me bare to the ground. My God, to eat so much and yet be so thin!"

All through the winter, Einar had packed the cured pelts solidly into the sleigh. Now he added the last ones, which had been scraped and salted, and stretched a tarpaulin over them and laced it tight, so no rain could leak in.

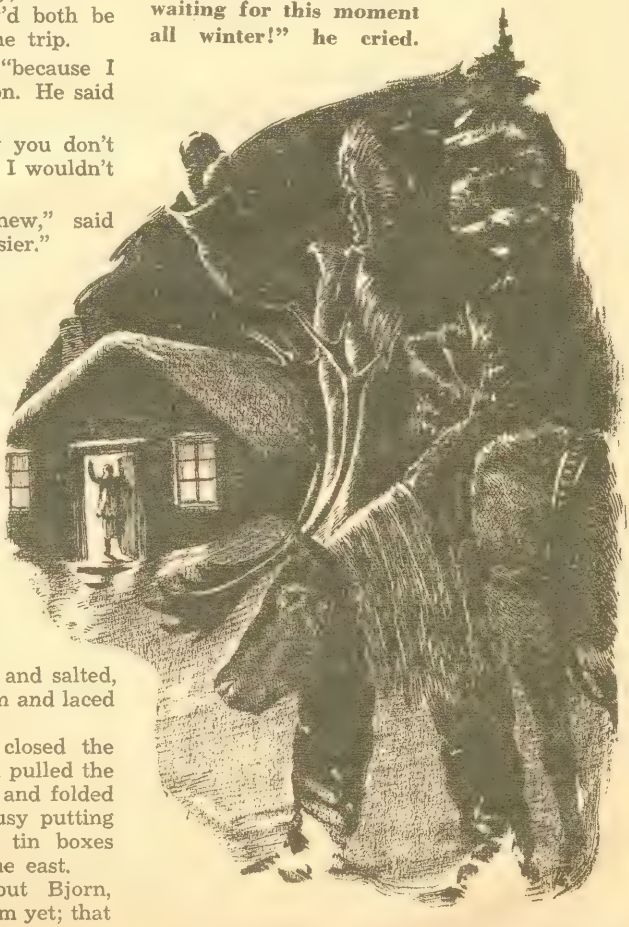
He went into the house, and closed the shutters of the deep windows, then pulled the blankets and fur robe off his bed, and folded them into a rucksack. He was busy putting the sugar, coffee and flour into tin boxes when he heard hoof-beats from the east.

It could hardly be anyone but Bjorn, though he hadn't really expected him yet; that had been an excuse to the old folks. He stood in the doorway, peering into the light, as he saw two reindeer crossing the snow at their ungainly trot. He reached for the gun by the door, in case it might be one of those Lapps who hi-jacked pelts in the early summer, then recognized the beaver cap of Bjorn, with its black ear-flaps.

Einar set the rifle down and stepped forward with a shout of welcome. Bjorn waved a mittened hand in greeting. The runners scraped slowly to a stop, and Bjorn jumped off the sleigh.

"I've been waiting for this moment all winter!" he cried, smiling so that his thin mouth ended in a crease at each corner. "Lord, but it's good to see you! And this time, I've got something for you." He lifted a canvas duffel bag from his sleigh, carried it inside.

Bjorn waved. "I've been waiting for this moment all winter!" he cried.



Illustrated by L. Sterne Stevens

He ran along, firing the fence, until the field was ringed with flames.

"Put your reindeer into the stalls," said Einar. "Give them a feed of hay and I'll fix you some food."

Bjorn led the animals into the barn, and shoveled hay into the bins. There wasn't much of it left, just a few bunches.

Einar cut a piece of meat from the venison flank, noticing that it was already softening. He'd have to pack it in ice unless he got away soon. But why wait? His sleigh was loaded and ready. He'd better be making it quick, the way the ice was cracking and the snow thawing off, while the rivers still were frozen, or he'd never get there at all. It would be heartbreaking to have to build a shelter for those precious furs, and wait there helpless, knowing that he had missed the first trading, when prices ran highest.

He put the meat on the stove, put his last three potatoes to bake in the oven, and laid tin plates on the table, and mugs for coffee.

Bjorn came in, stamping the snow off his feet. "Pretty soon it'll be mud," he observed. "Einar, I've something to tell you, but I don't know if I should."

Einar reached on the mantel above the fireplace for a half-empty bottle of aquavit. "Nothing bad, I hope. At least, it calls for a drink."

"No, not bad news," said Bjorn, "or I wouldn't tell it so quick. But it's just that I know you are a crazy man, like me. If I were in your place, I'd do what I'm suggesting. But I tell myself it's crazy."

"You're all mixed up," said Einar. "Anyway, let's have a drink."

Bjorn took the mug and drained it, then picked up the picture of Gina by Einar's bed, and shook his head, as he smiled at it.

"For her, I'd do it, if I were you."

"Well, what is it?" he asked. "I can't see how I'll get along another winter without that girl."

Bjorn drew open the cord of his duffel bag. "I don't blame you," he said. "And I hope I don't get blamed if you do this crazy thing."

He threw things out of the roll—fishing tackle, rope and a tin of tobacco, rifle ammunition, a chunk of rock salt and reels of cotton.

He dug deeper into the bag, and finally pulled out a packet. Einar went to the stove and turned the meat.

"Here it is," said Bjorn. "It was given to me last month by a stranger who came to North Fiord, an American, working for Lend-Lease, he said." He gave the packet to Einar.

On the cover was a colored picture of a man standing with a long spade-shaped vegetable in his arms. It was red, and so big that the thin end touched the ground, while the leaves at the top were level with his shoulder.

"It was developed in California," Bjorn said. "It's a fodder-beet."

"What's that?" asked Einar, turning the packet. There was fine printing in six different languages on the back.

"It ripens in sixty days in any kind of soil. You pull it up, dry it and stack it like cordwood, then chop it up as you need it for fodder for the animals. You know what that means, don't you?"

"What?"

"It means you can grow your own fodder, even up here in the northland. With this you can feed a cow or a dozen cows, in the winter, and save the expense and delay of bringing up hay for them."

Einar poked up the embers under his stove and left the pot of coffee to keep hot as he thought of what Bjorn was telling him. Perhaps the drink had slowed down his brain; he couldn't seem to think very well.

He laid the packet down and took his pipe off the mantel. As he filled the pipe he shook his head. "Now, how can I take my pelts to the fur traders; get my money; make arrangements to marry Gina; settle with her family; bring her and the cow back, and at the same time grow beets?"

"That's the trouble," said Bjorn, "getting the first crop in. But this is the only time you can do it, and I'll tell you how. You plant

the seeds right away, cultivate for two months, then get to town before winter sets in, after harvesting your crop; do your buying, and bring your bride back with you. In the future, you'll have to change your system. You'll go in a little earlier, sell your pelts first, and get back before the spring thaw to grow your summer beets. You won't be able to hang around town for a month or so, as you used to do, but you'll have a wife then, and won't mind staying here. Besides, it will make you rich."

"It can't be done," said Einar, as he put salt on the meat. "Someone with a big family might get it started and try it, and if it works, then I'll see what I can do."

Bjorn took his beaver cap off, and threw it across the room. "You're like the rest of them; you've got no imagination. You're the wrong man to take a chance, I guess. Well, I'm relieved; I wouldn't want to take the responsibility anyway. It was just a thought, because you're my friend and I knew you wanted to get married soon."

He took back the packet of seeds. "Of course," he said, "if there was an early snowfall, you could get to town after the beets ripened and still have time to come back. That way you'd cut down two years into one, and bring Gina back with you this year instead of next. But if you'd rather wait through another winter for her—" He shrugged.

Einar stared at him in silence. "Leave the seeds," he said at last, as he put the meat on the table.

Bjorn scraped up a chair to the table and cut the thick slab of meat. Einar brought out the hot potatoes.

"At your own risk," he said. "I shouldn't play with other folks' lives like this. I'm not God."

Einar sat down, took the packet in his hand, turning it over, feeling the seeds through the slick wrapper.

"My reindeer can eat tundra grass and moss for two months, and I can fish and hunt game. Could you spare me some flour?"

"Yes," said Bjorn. "But think it over."

"Another thing," said Einar. "Are you going to North Fiord?"

"No. I wasn't planning to go now—maybe later—but I'll meet someone who is before I get back over the Blue Mountains again. I'll

tell them to let Gina know that you'll be there late."

"You read minds," said Einar, as he cut into the skin of his potato.

III

EINAR had never spent a summer on his land. Now he faced a country he had never known before. Freshets of water seeped through the peat walls, and he dug a drainage trench along the sides of the hut. He brought fresh moss and patched the walls and roof, and made the barn secure from the driving summer rains.

One day he awoke to find the tundra blanketed with yellow flowers, with little leaves and stems, like golden eyes in the earth.

He hobbled the reindeer and let them graze. Thor no longer trembled a hungry loose lip at him. He was so well fed that he chewed a perpetual cud in animal content.

The river, a mile away, which had been a mass of ice and broken floes, became a deep flowing stream. Once he saw two Lapps come down it in a canoe, paddling swiftly through the rapids on their hazardous journey. He fished by the edge of the river, and caught a twelve-pound salmon.

When the earth was really thawed, he hitched Thor to a plow, which he had fashioned out of pine, laced with thongs. The thing fell apart after he had plowed one row, and he had to stop to patch it every few feet. There were more rocks in that level stretch of land by the front of his house than he had ever imagined. He dug them bare with a hatchet, then pulled them out with his fingers. After the first day's work his hands were blistered and bleeding.

By now the sun of June was beating down on the land, and he put aside his parka and leather jacket, and worked, half-stripped, in his trousers.

The little yellow flowers shriveled into brown, and vanished from the fields. Einar wondered if the tundra grass would last out for his reindeer. He gathered tufts of it, and set it aside in a stack.

One day, when the seeds were down, he saw a buck and a doe nibbling at the haystack. He ran, shouting at them, and they fled toward the pine trees. For two days he split rails and made a fence around the stack.

When the sun was hot enough to sear his shoulder blades, he began a regular portage of water for his seeds. He put a sieve bottom in a five-gallon can, for sprinkling, and teamed Thor, Baldur, Loki and Odin to haul it to and from the river.

He kept the lamp burning, so that he could measure time, and crossed his calendar each day before he went to work. As the sun never set, that was the only way he could figure how long it would take for his beets to grow.

Then, one morning, he checked off the tenth day and walked out to the field, and saw the first green buds pushing up through the soil. And that night, although it wasn't night, since the sun always shone, he watered his precious field, and went to sleep exhausted.

After a few hours he awoke with the feeling that something was wrong. He jumped to his feet, half asleep, and staggered to the door. He looked out, and saw four deer in the upper end of the field, nibbling at the little tender shoots. He yelled hoarsely at them and they trembled and ran away, off into the pines. He went out and found that ten of his plants had been pulled up.

Instead of sleeping inside the house the next time he was weary, he moved his pallet out into the open, and slept with his gun propped over his knees. The thought of the greedy animals rather frightened him, for his calendar told him there were still forty-five days before the beets would ripen.

The day the last patch of snow was gone, he cut up the remains of the haunch of venison and fried it for his meal, and at beside the window that overlooked the meadow. When he had finished he pushed his empty tin plate aside, and went out to the barn. He sharpened his axe once more upon the whetstone, and whistled to Thor. The creature turned from nibbling the dry grass.

"We're going to build a rail fence, old fellow," Einar said, "and keep those greedy beasts out of our field."

His voice sounded hollow, for lately he hadn't even spoken to his reindeer; they were always away from him, hobbled, grazing in the meadows.

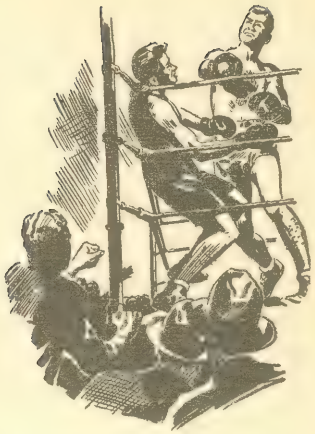
Einar harnessed Thor and led him to the pine woods. After chopping down ten pine saplings, he attached them to the trailing thongs on Thor's harness, and led him back to the field.

On the way, sweat pouring down his face, he stopped to wipe his forehead. Surely, it wasn't so hot as that, he thought, stupidly; then the earth seemed to heave up under him, and he barely managed to twist Thor's harness free of his wrist before he pitched to the ground. He forced himself up a few minutes later, and began to vomit. It was the venison, he realized; it was too old, and spoiled by the heat. Again he was violently ill. He lay upon the ground, sweating and chilling, until at (*Continued on page* 126)

Big City Blues

by John Wells

Illustrated by Ernest Chiriacka and John Meola



Matty Chase did not mind taking one last ring beating as the price of starting his big-time band. What he had not counted on was the torch singer who raised his blood pressure, the crooner who made him lose his temper—and the Nazi trench knife which hung a murder frame around his neck!

"YOU will beat the bum," Fat Lip said. "You are hardened by three years of the military life and you are middleweight champeen of the world. I am personally betting three dollars on you."

Matty Chase grinned at him. "You hock that trumpet again?" Matty sat on the edge of the rubbing table while Baldy Gowan taped his hands. His dark hair was neatly combed and a thin coating of vaseline glistened on his small, regular features. Whether the features would still be even and regular at the close of the evening was a matter that rested in the heavy hands of Senor Felio Gomez.

Matty said, "I haven't had a fight in over three years. This guy is good. I could lose."

"Not to a bum named 'Felio'," Fat Lip pleaded. "Not that. I couldn't stand it."

In a corner of the dressing room Botsy Bifano, with two tightly rolled newspapers, beat a Samba rhythm on the seat of a chair. He said, "Don't tell us we bring you safe through three years of the Army just so some Mexican bum can hand you your head."

Baldy finished with the taping job and Matty said, "You guys blow. I want to rest a while. I'll see you after the fight." The nerves of his stomach were parading now. It was always that way before a fight. He was suddenly not in the mood to joke with Fat Lip and Botsy. They sensed it. They were smart people and they knew him well. They shook hands with him and told him to take good care of himself in there, and then they were gone. Matty lay on the rubbing table and closed his eyes and Baldy said, "They are funny guys, kid. Where did you pick them up?"

"In the Army," Matty told him. "We went in about the same time and last month we all got out on points. They're nice people." He said, "Baldy, can I beat this guy?"

"Yeah," Baldy said. "Maybe you can beat him. Three years ago you could, but now it's just a maybe proposition." Baldy was one of the best corner men in the business. "The guy is very good, very tough. You will have a time with him, kid."

Matty knew that. He had not seen Gomez fight but he had seen pictures of several of his fights. The man was able and tough and a fine puncher. He said, "That O'Keefe does not bother with bums."

"Willie is a smart guy. He does not waste none of his time."

"Willie is an eighteen carat louse."

Baldy nodded. "But smart."

Matty remembered what Joe Palino had looked like yesterday. When Matty had gone into the Army, Joe had been through with

fighting. "A few small bells in the head," he had told Matty. "The left eye not so good. I'm quittin'."

But Willie O'Keefe had talked him out of that. Willie had talked him into thirty fights in the last three years, had talked him into blindness, into a thoroughly addled head. Joe Palino was not pretty to look at, now. Willie O'Keefe was unscarred and quite a bit richer.

Tonight he would make plenty on Gomez, Matty knew. The ball park outside was crowded to the rafters, and the beautiful autumn evening was filled with the voice of the mob. He would like to beat Gomez tonight. He would like to beat him because there was pride in him, a fighting man's pride, and he was a champion and had seldom been a losing fighter. He would like to beat Gomez and Willie O'Keefe, and walk away from the fight business with his head high.

Baldy said, "There's a mob out there. You make a buck tonight, kid."

It was true. Fifty thousand dollars was a nice piece of change. It would permit him to set up the band, to put behind him forever the fear of ruined eyes and addled brains.

They got the call, then. Someone hammered on the door and yelled, "The semi's in the last round. You're on next, champ!"

Baldy took his little black bag and they quit the nervous security of the dressing room. The semi-final was over and the fighters out of the ring when they started down the long aisle leading to the blazing patch of white that was the ring. The crowd spotted him almost at once and the swelling, mighty roar went up into the night.

The canvas felt fine and tight beneath his shoes. Matty was anxious to get to work. The tension was high and his nerves tight, but he knew that soon there would be a release in the throwing of heavy leather. He turned his back to the ring and looked out across the ropes, and down on the aisle he saw Fat Lip waving to him. He grinned and waved a bandaged hand above his head. Fat Lip and his three dollars.

It was really on the transport taking them to North Africa that he had come to know Fat Lip Fields, and Botsy Bifano had joined them six months later, in Sicily, as a replacement. They had been together ever since. Fat Lip was one of the finest trumpet players Matty had ever heard, and Botsy was a tuneful madman with a set of drums. The idea of forming their own band, of playing music the way they thought it should be played, had occurred to Fat Lip. Matty had thought of little else for the past year. It meant a release from this battering trade he had learned and mastered, it meant a future filled with music of his own playing, perhaps of his own making.

But it also meant fighting Gomez tonight. They needed money and this was obviously the way to get it.

The usual number of celebrities were introduced from the ring, and Matty had a chance to think about the last month and a half. The resolution to form the band had been well formed in his mind before he'd received his discharge. He had had a month to train for the fight, and he'd worked hard. He knew he was in good shape, but he knew also that he should have had at least two tune-up fights for this one. You don't come back after a three year vacation and walk into the ring with a guy like Gomez. But there just hadn't been sufficient time for him to do it properly.

He and Gomez were introduced, then, and in a moment he and Baldy walked to the center of the ring to meet Gomez and Johnny Burns, who was working the fight.

Matty looked the guy over. Gomez was a dull leather color, and where his arms ended and his gloves began a man could scarcely tell. His face was flat, his eyes cold and unimaginative, his mouth a thin slit in his face. He looked at Matty the way a snake looks at a bird.

Willie O'Keefe was with him. Willie said, "You shoulda stood in the Army, Chase. My bum will murder you."

"Can he see?" Matty asked. "You sure he's got both eyes? I hear you're renting dogs for most of your boys."

"You're a wise punk now," Willie snarled, "but you'll be a sorry punk before this thing is over."

They understood each other. If O'Keefe had been a foot taller, Matty would have whacked him for the pure joy of it.

Johnny Burns said, "A lot of people paid a lot of money to see this thing. Give them a show."

Gomez said nothing. He stared at Matty like some Inca idol, then spoiled the picture by spitting at Matty's feet.

Back in the corner, Baldy said, "You take care of yourself with this bum. He might be carryin' a knife."

"I guess I should have brought a loaf of bread and fifteen cents worth of baloney," Matty said, but he did not feel very funny.

THE bell turned him and he went out slowly. Gomez moved to meet him easily, nicely, softly, and Matty knew he was in for an evening.

At the end of the first round he knew several things. Gomez was very smart, Gomez was very tough, Gomez threw a very heavy

punch. He knew something else: that he had been too long away from his trade. His reactions were just a trifle too slow, his returns a split second too late. Gomez could hit him and Gomez could hurt him. If Matty were to win this fight, it would be a very extraordinary thing.

Gomez got to him heavily in the second round. They were in Matty's corner in a mauling clinch when Gomez suddenly broke away with the speed of a cat. He was out of the clinch, his hands free, while Matty was still unraveling his arms. He stood two feet away and belted Matty with a left, a right and another left. Matty moved along the ropes and Gomez followed. Matty took a left and another right high on the head, and the ring lights were suddenly a foggy blur. He worked toward the center of the ring and Gomez paced after him, belting with both hands. The crowd was in an uproar.

Matty took a chance and threw a right hand down the line. It hit solidly and he walked after it, grabbing for the Mexican. Gomez was shaken by the hit and willing to clinch. Matty fussed with him for a moment, shaking the gongs out of his head, then shoved him away and threw the right again. It was a mistake.

Gomez slipped the right and threw his own and did not miss. The punch jarred Matty to his heels, and a left hook bit into his belly before the shock of the first punch had subsided. He found himself with his back against the ropes again, Gomez a punching, punishing blur before him. He felt his knees starting to sag just as the bell rang out.

He walked stiff-legged to his corner and the stool was a wonderful thing under him. Baldy hit him with a cold sponge and said, "Be smart. This guy will punch the eyes out of your head if you mess with him. Play around for a while until you get the feel of the thing. You been away a long time, kid."

Matty knew he was right. He drew the night air into his lungs in great draughts. He needed a few more rounds under his belt. He was not warm.

Gomez was smart. The bell rang out and Gomez came to him swiftly. Matty pushed the left hand out there and tried to go away but it was no dice. The Mexican took the left high on his head and came in under. He blasted at Matty's middle with both fists, storming him into the ropes. Matty punched with both hands and missed, and then the thunder hit him.

Gomez raised both hands to the head and his marksmanship was fine. Matty felt as if someone were working on him with a baseball bat. He tasted heavy blood in his mouth and his punches missed their target. He found himself in a corner and Gomez landed six punches in a row. Matty felt the canvas slipping from beneath his feet. He took a clubbing right high upon the face and fell slowly forward, as if in a dream. His legs refused to work for him.

He heard Burns shout "Five!" His chin was shoving against the canvas, which was not white, now, but stained and dirty, with the weave very evident in it. He got his hands under him, then his legs, and when the word was "Nine!" he was on his feet, Burns in front of him, cleaning the rosin off his gloves. Then the barricade of Burns was gone, and Gomez came to him once more, murder in his eyes, murder in his hands.

The first two punches rocked him again, but he succeeded in getting in close. It was no better there. Gomez crashed an elbow into his face, butted him with practiced savagery. He ripped his open glove up Matty's face and the laces cut like knives. He hooked him with the left and right, drove him into the open. Matty stabbed with the left, but he might as well have jabbed a charging bull. Gomez roughed him into the ropes, threw a right hand deep below the belt, socked the left hand in there again. He straightened Matty with the left, hit him flush upon the chin with a full right hand. Matty fell upon his face.

Matty came to with acid biting at his brain. His frantic hand pushed the smelling salts aside, his head clear and stinging, the strength coming back into his arms and his legs.

Baldy Gowan said, "You had enough? This guy will make you unfit for the black market butchers. The bell rings at 'Seven' and I drag you in here by the heels. You are a mess."

Matty said, "Give me the salts again."

Then he pushed the bottle away and said, "This guy cannot knock me out in three rounds. I will go to the union."

"You will go to the tailor's for a stitching job," Baldy said. "I would work on you now but I ain't got my Singer handy."

The buzzer sounded flatly and Baldy asked, "You gonna be able to get up?"

"Wait until the bell rings and I'll tell you."

CHAPTER TWO

THE bell rang and he got up. His legs were bags of flour under him, but as he walked slowly to the center of the ring they stiffened and he felt the life come back into them. Gomez came to him and Matty jumped the left hand into his face. He jammed it in there once again, then clinched, hang-

ing on for all he was worth. He tied Gomez into skillful knots learned in a long apprenticeship, and when he was forced to break he stabbed the left at Gomez and clinched again. By the time Burns untangled them, Matty was a whole man.

For the rest of the round he succeeded in staying away from the Mexican. Gomez was a little weary from all the excessive punching. He followed Matty closely and punched sharply, but the fury was gone from his attack for the moment. Matty finished the round much stronger than he had started it.

Baldy worked swiftly with his dope stick and small bits of plaster. "They should not let them guys put razors in their gloves. You look like you been sleepin' on a pillow full of broken glass."

Matty did not listen to him. This was the one coming up. If he got through this one he had a chance. He was warm, now, looser and moving more easily. If he got by this one and the next, he had a chance.

Through the fifth, Gomez was busy and his hands were hard, but Matty fought him. It was like fighting a machine. A machine or an animal. It was hard to hit him, and when you hit him it did not seem to matter. He kept coming in, his punches rocking you, hurting you, his hands too fast and his head too hard.

Matty stayed with him, taking the punishment the man was handing out, giving in return what he could. The rhythm of the thing came to him slowly, and in the tenth he felt the turn of the tide. He was beating Gomez to the punch. His body was nice and loose and doing what he expected it to do, and his brain was a trifle faster than the Mexican's. He had taken a beating, a fine dirtying-up, but his body had survived it, and now the wind was swinging around.

After the twelfth he asked Baldy, "How does it go, Baldy?"

"It goes good," Baldy said. "Now it goes good, but you are the ex-middleweight champ of the world, kid. Those early rounds. . ." He shook his head.

Matty said, "I will stop the bum. I have three rounds."

Baldy said, "You stop him and I will lose a bet and like it. You got my best wishes."

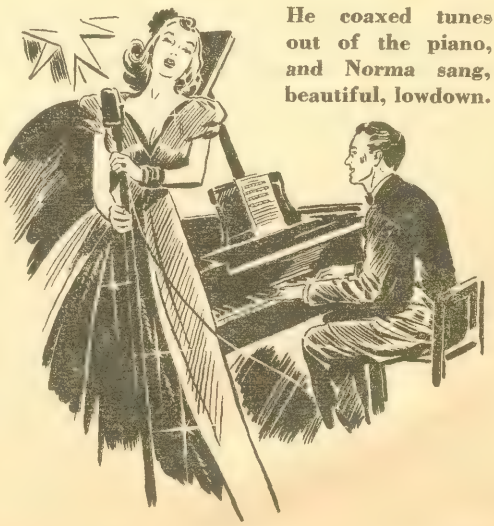
Gomez took a lot of stopping. Matty went to him with moving leather. The flat-eyed animal fought fiercely and well, and at the end of the fourteenth much of the blood upon Matty's chest was his own. Gomez was tiring rapidly but he was not licked. He still carried thunder in his hands, murder in his heart.

In the fifteenth, Matty went out winging. He went across the ring on eager, sliding feet and his left hook to the body sank in up to the wrist. Gomez chopped him with a right that almost took his ear off, then he had the man on the ropes. He banged a left and right to the head, drove the right with terrible power to the body. Gomez' return was weak and Matty clubbed him with the right. Gomez threw a right that was high but solid, then came inside as Matty faltered.

His head was like a bowling ball as it butted into Matty's forehead. The pain was stunning and the blood poured down from the cut above the eye. Matty pushed him away, mopped at the eye with his right hand. Gomez reached him with a right that almost drove the legs from under him.

He walked into Gomez, then, with his hands cocked. He punched short and hard, and every shot went home. The blood poured into the bad eye, but one was all he needed. He slugged Gomez into the ropes and ignored the rain of leather that fell upon his own head. He drew a bead upon that heavy chin and let the whole works ride. His legs and his back were in every punch he threw and he could feel the impacts in his heels. He was strong and filled with anger and the work was very satisfactory.

Matty threw a left hook to the head, and the right that followed was measured and very solid. Gomez went over backward, his rump upon the canvas, his heels high in the air. Matty walked to a corner, wiped the blood from his eye with a thumb, waited for the count. He did not know whether the



He coaxed tunes out of the piano, and Norma sang, beautiful, lowdown.

Mexican would get up. He knew the guy was hurt.

Gomez got up. There was no chicken in the man. Matty went to him quickly, and he knew this was the finish. He had felt it in Gomez, he felt it now in his own strength and unlimited power. He could go a hundred rounds tonight.

He hit Gomez with a left, clubbed him with a right. The man started to fold and Matty stepped away, stabbed him with the left hand lightly, setting him up.

The bell rang out, its brazen clangor cutting into his absorption like a knife. He walked away, left the Mexican leaning helpless upon the ropes.

In the corner Baldy worked upon the cut with gentle deftness. Matty said, "Well, what's the story?"

"I wouldn't know, kid. If I was judgin' this thing I'd slit my throat. I would need almost as many stitches as you do."

The decision came in a moment. The announcer gathered the slips from the two judges and the referee, pulled the dangling microphone to him, shouted, "The winner and new champion. . ."

MATTY felt disappointment sweep over him like a tide. It was no way to go out of the business. He should have beaten the guy. If he had taken a little more time, if he had had another fight before this . . .

He wrapped a towel around his shoulders and crossed the ring. The crowd was howling its mingled disgust and elation to the night sky, and as he walked across the canvas a great roar went up. It was a tribute such as he had seldom been accorded, and he waved his tired hand over his head and grinned.

They had Gomez in pretty good shape, now, and Matty said to him, "You did all right. Head and all, you did all right. Any time I want a wall busted down, I'll know who to call."

Gomez glared at him but did not answer. Willie O'Keefe, his too-tight derby perched on the back of his head, said, "You were lucky. Another round and we would have murdered you."

Matty looked at him, and distaste was strong in him. He said, "Why don't you go crawl under a log, O'Keefe? What are you doin' out here where it's light?"

O'Keefe's face had a rat-like cast. "Easy how you talk to me, punk. Easy how you—"

Matty shoved a sweaty palm against his face and O'Keefe disappeared through the ropes. Matty turned to Gomez, who was coming off his stool. He said, "Stay where you are. I was just going to give you some advice. When O'Keefe buys a Seeing Eye dog for you, you'll quit if you're smart. Take care of yourself."

He walked away and there was no word spoken after him, and the area around the ringside was loud in its laughter as O'Keefe climbed back inside the ropes. Matty turned and grinned at him, but the grin vanished from his face when he saw the expression in O'Keefe's eyes. It was not a pleasant thing to contemplate.

In the dressing room Matty sat patiently while the doctor put four stitches in the cut over his eye. The hot shower had taken the pain out of him and an examination of his face in a mirror had revealed no other heavy damage.

Fat Lip perched the two hundred and twenty pounds of himself upon a rubbing table and said, "Where is the massage guy? I need a rubdown. I have never fought such a fight from the twentieth row. I am exhausted."

Little Botsy said, "You rip the pocket right out of my coat with a vicious left hook in the sixth. You lose your three dollars and a tailoring bill."

"It reminds me of the time my Uncle Eddie fights the landlord," Fat Lip said. "They are about even from the seventh floor down to the second, then Uncle Eddie trips over the bannister."

"What happens?" Botsy wanted to know.

"The landlord collects his rent out of Uncle Eddie's accident insurance. A great fight."

Matty grinned. He knew how they felt. He had been with them too long not to know that their disappointment was greater than his own. He said, "Maybe I will fight him again." He knew it wasn't so. He was through with the thing once and for all. A few more fights like tonight and he would be walking around on his hands.

He did not like the manner of his departure from the game, however. Gomez was good, but he should not have lost to him. He should not have lost to a Willie O'Keefe fighter who used his head for butting and his laces for cutting.

"Maybe the band will go better," he said, and the words were hopeful of the future and born of the past. He was twenty-eight years old, and the future was like a bridge that you approach on a boat. At first it is a distant thing and small, then it grows quickly larger, and at a certain moment it is directly overhead. And too high overhead to grab onto.

Fat Lip was on his feet, his hands holding an imaginary trumpet before him. He made circus-entrance music. "The band!" he said.

"The greatest aggregation of musicians, ladies and gentlemen. . ."

Botsy interrupted him. He came over to Matty as the doctor applied the finishing touches. "Listen," he said. "I got a guitar player. I hear him in a joint on Eleventh Street last night. He is playing for nickels and dimes, and you sit there with a beer and you are in Spain, in Mexico, in Brazil. The guy does tricks I have never heard. A whole rhythm section."

"You know his address?"

"I put him in the YMCA and give him five dollars. He thinks I am a millionaire. His name is San Francisco del Ray Ocricobonzo y Floriso."

Fat Lip stared at him. "Say it again."

"At these prices? But he's good. We almost have an outfit. A trombone and a bass and we're set."

Matty wrinkled his brow painfully. "I heard a bass fiddle over the radio last night. Late. A band playing from a little joint across the river. Suppose we go and take a look."

Fat Lip shrugged. "On what? Even the ferry costs a nickel. That three dollars was my roll."

Matty said, "You jerk. I've got fifty thousand bucks."

Fat Lip and Botsy stared at each other. They shouted at the same moment, "Beer money!"

CHAPTER THREE

MATTY was worried about the band, although they had gathered it about them with a degree of certainty, for they knew exactly what they wanted. Botsy had called a trombone player in Chicago. His name was Jake Apple, and the first time Matty heard him blow that horn he felt a happy warmth within himself. The guy was good.

The bass player they had looked up in Jersey was a huge Negro named Willy Wilson. He just stood there grinning all night and the big box talked right back to him.

The band formed like that. One guy knew another, had played with him, had heard him play. These men gave no bad steers. They were musicians and they knew music. They recommended no turnips.

San Francisco del Ray Ocricobonzo y Floriso's talent had not been exaggerated, Matty discovered, and the matter of his name was simplified when everyone called him George. He played the guitar as if his mother had been a guitar.

They found a kid named Honey Harms to fill out the brass section. He played a sinful clarinet as well as the sax, and when Matty gave them the nod, real music came walking out of all that plumbing.

Matty did the arranging. He set a rich and simple pattern that allowed room for improvement. He told Fat Lip, "The music we will play is not the great music of the world. It has been arranged and rearranged, and by men better than I. Our big bet is us. We have very fine instrumentalists. Improvisation—a lightly disciplined improvisation that will not differ too much from our pattern—is what might distinguish us from fifty other good bands. And occasionally we will throw the keys out the window and tear a good number to pieces. Moderation, even in moderation."

Fat Lip nodded. "Like we planned in Italy."

The first time the outfit played together, Matty was aware of the distrust in the eyes of the other men. They were professionals. This was their medium of expression, and only incidentally was it their means of making a living. They all said, "Hello, Matty," pleasantly enough, and Jake Apple said, "It was too bad about the other night. I thought you beat the guy."

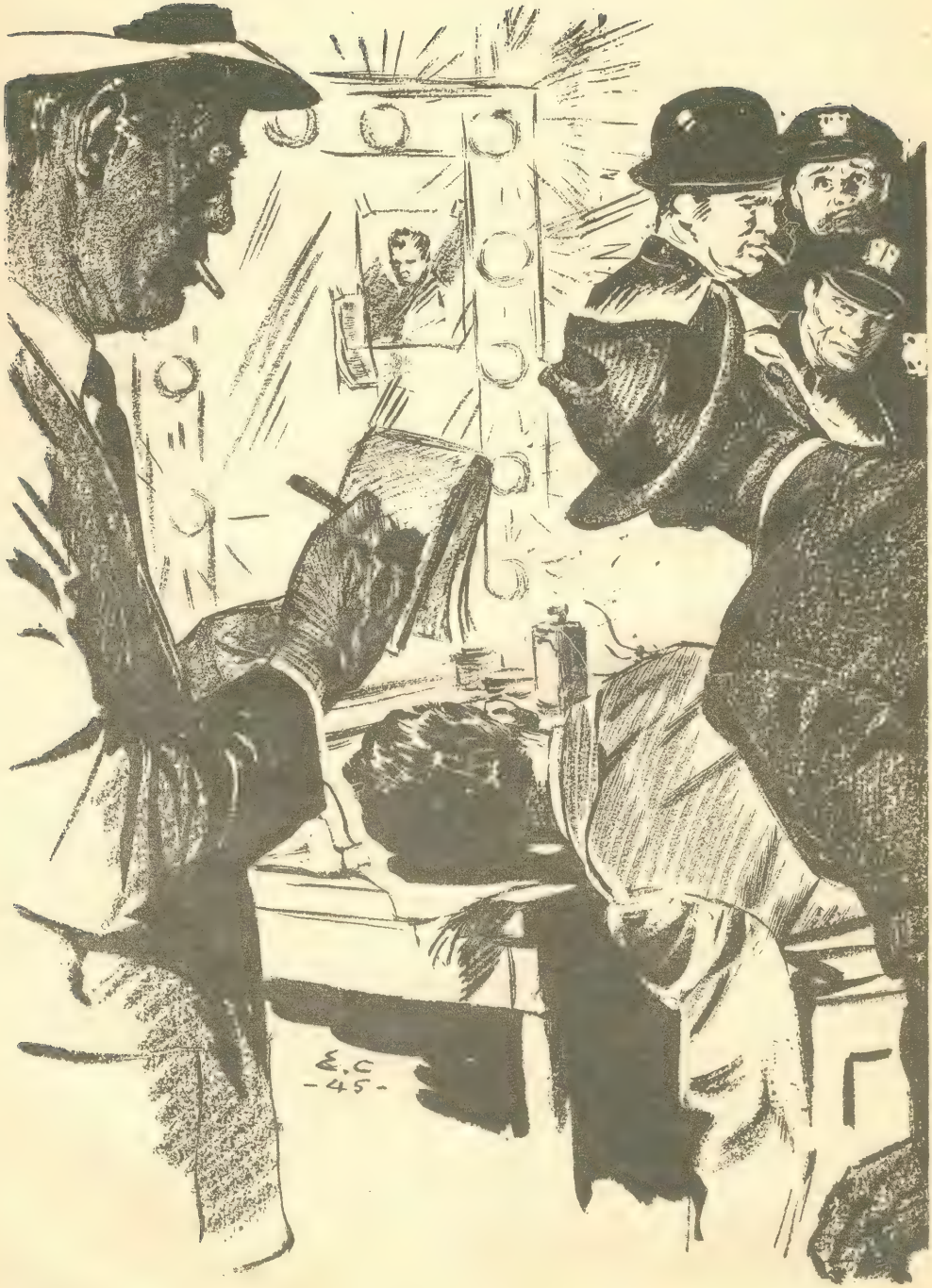
Fat Lip broke the ice. He said, "Matty, play something for the boys. Warm them up." Matty got the idea.

He played "An American in Paris." The Gershwin music rolled cleanly, deeply, sweetly off the keys, and his facile, practiced hands wrung the last bit of feeling out of the piece without in the least bruising it. He played it through all the way, played it straight and true and clean, and when he finished he looked up from the keyboard and they were all silent, watching him.

Willy Wilson broke the silence. He said, "Yeah, yeah, yeah, man! What else we all goin' to play, Matty?" Jake Apple said, "My, oh my," and Honey Harm just nodded and grinned. Fat Lip beamed all over the place, then sobered and said, "Let's get to work." Matty was one of them.

The practice room high above Forty-seventh Street was a busy place from then on. Matty told them what sort of an effect they were trying to achieve, very sound music with plenty of freedom. "Lots of solos," he said. "Anytime one of you gets an idea he has something special, give me the eye and you can take one alone. We just want to make some music."

He showed them arrangements he had made for most of the popular stuff. They liked it. Joe Seymour, who played a wicked trumpet, shook his head, "All my life I've been tryin' to get band leaders to whittle stuff down like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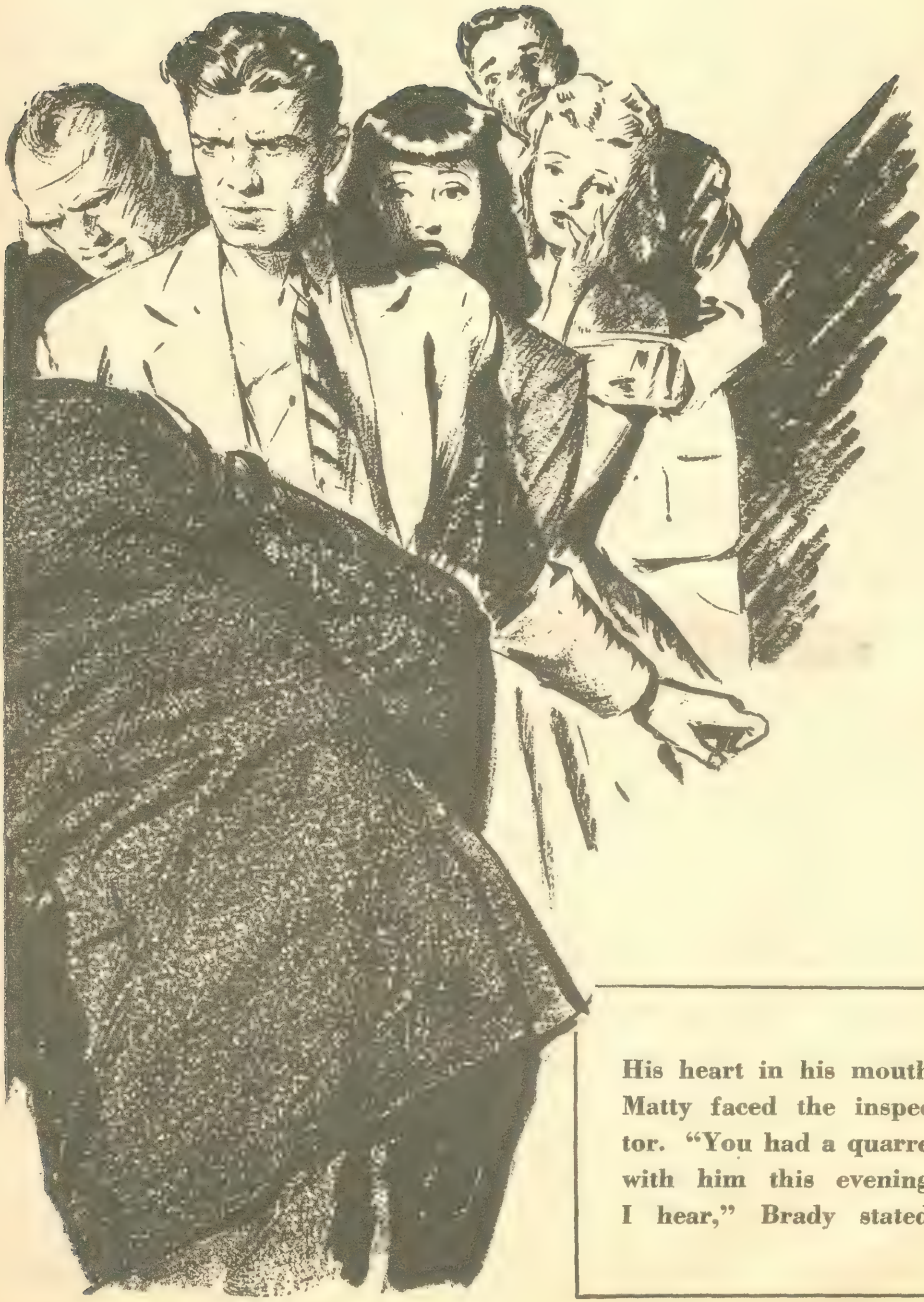
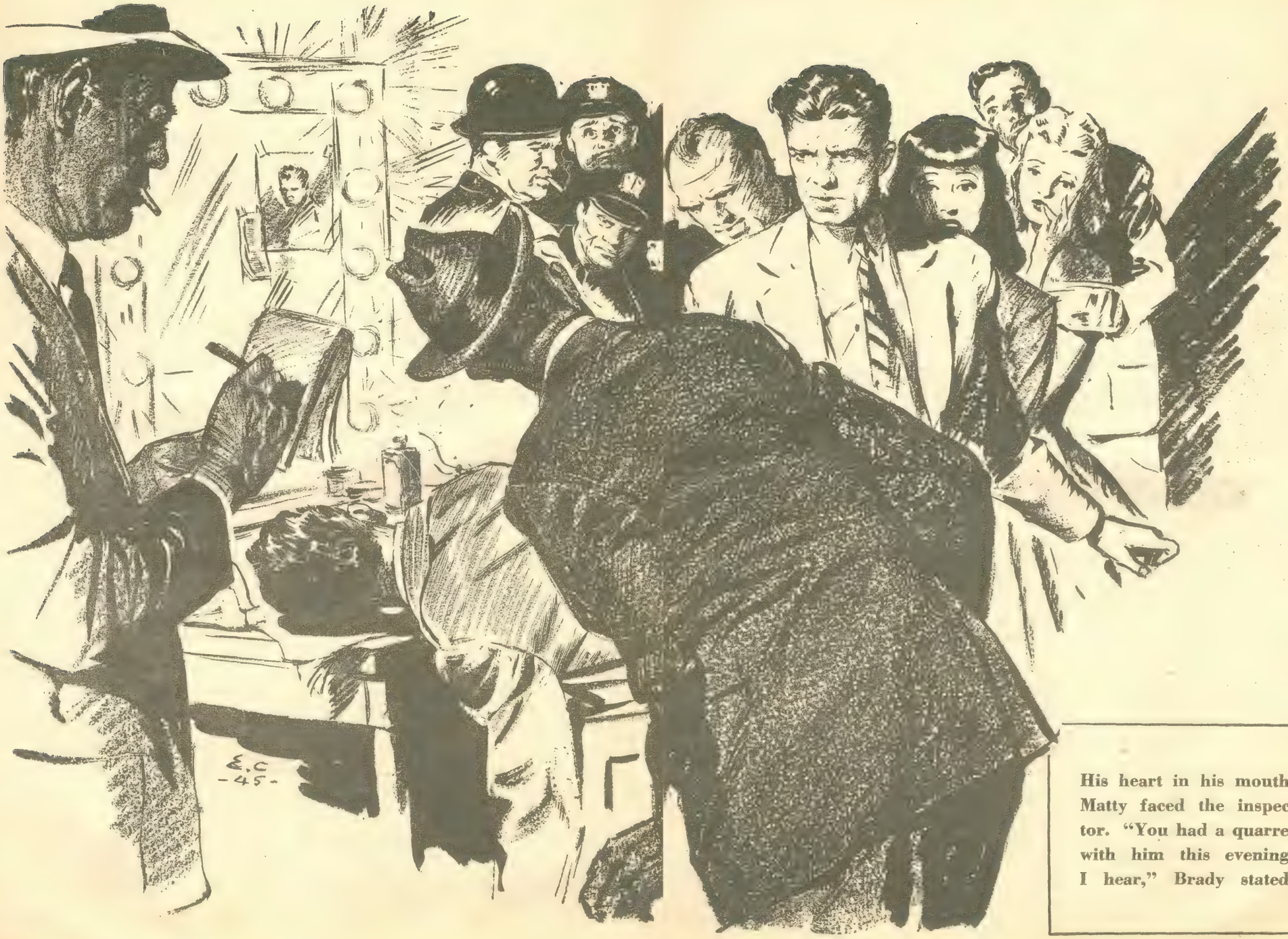


His heart in his mouth, Matty faced the inspector. "You had a quarrel with him this evening, I hear," Brady stated.



His heart in his mouth, Matty faced the inspector. "You had a quarrel with him this evening, I hear," Brady stated.

that, but no one would pay any attention to me. I like."

Fat Lip handed the sheets around and Matty said, "How's if we try 'Big River' for a start."

They were never ragged. From the first moment they were all in there doing it right. They were feeling for the other fellow, listening to the music inside themselves, never treading on another man's note. After three hours' practice Harry Edwards, a sax player, said, "We could take any job in the country. You give us one more piano and maybe a couple of violins and you can name your own spot."

Matty grinned. "We'll take a week or two and smooth it off a bit."

They took two weeks. Everyone worked and Matty worried. This had to be it. He had the men he wanted, the music he wanted, and if this thing fell on its face he would have no excuse to offer.

Fat Lip said, "We need a singer. We need a singer with shoulder-length blond hair and a build that stops traffic. Incidentally she should be able to sing."

Botsy made a disparaging noise. "We need a singer like I need three more ears."

Jake Apple patted his bald head. "You get somebody that can really sing—somebody that can sing the way we play—and you got something. Someone who can feel the music. I made a record with Billie Holiday once and it was like havin' another instrument in the band. You can do more things with a voice than you can with any horn, any fiddle, any piano."

Matty said, "A voice has warmth. It is not an indirect thing. It does not go through a pipe or a bundle of felt hammers. It comes right out of a human being, and if the person has a good voice and a feel about music, you have something you can get no other way."

"You ever hear Crosby really fool around with something?" Harry Edwards wanted to know. "You want to throw your horn out the window. When they can *sing*—"

Fat Lip was suddenly confidential. "I got a cousin in Philadelphia. She's twenty-five or so. She—"

"She looks like you," Botsy said, "she should stay in Philadelphia."

"She looks like me, but in a feminine sort of way," Fat Lip said. "And she is built better. She can sing. Occasionally she sings in the opera but it does not pay her enough to eat with. But she sings good."

Botsy nodded sourly. "It'll be nice. We can play a few arias from an opera three times a night. What the hell is happening here?"

Matty said, "Tell her to come up, Fat Lip. Maybe we'll feed her once, anyway, after we listen to her." He said, "We also need an agent. Maybe around this time we can start to make a little moola."

"I got a brother-in-law," Fat Lip said quickly, "who is the hottest, the busiest damned agent you ever saw."

"The guy's got more relatives than Heinz has pickles," Botsy said. "This thing will rapidly become 'Fields Family & Co.' if we don't watch out. I suppose you got an uncle who plays a fiddle." He scowled at Fat Lip.

"I got an aunt who plays the fiddle. But very good. If you were to hear—"

"Bring her around," Matty said. "I mean the cousin who sings."

NORMA MORAN came to the rehearsal the next day. Matty was sitting at the piano, fooling with a tune, and the rest of the boys were taking a smoke and a bottle of beer. He looked up as she entered, let his eyes fall back to the keys again, then did a quick double-take.

The girl was really something. She had dark hair that fell in soft waves to her wide shoulders, and it framed a face that was as lovely as any Matty had ever seen. She walked in rhythm on long, beautiful legs. Matty said, "My!"

The girl looked around the suddenly silent room. Spying Fat Lip, she said, "Hello, Edelbert. Am I on time?"

Botsy beat out a great roll on his drums. He screamed, "Edelbert! For three years I have been hanging around with someone named 'Edelbert' and I thought it was my sinus."

Fat Lip poised his huge bulk over the drummer. "If ever. . ." Then he turned to the girl and smiled. "Hello, Norma." He led her over to the piano and Matty stood up. "This is Matty Chase." He waved a meaty hand. "The boys."

"But Matty Chase," the girl said in that low voice that crept inside your vest, "is a fighter. I read the sports pages." She smiled in a very pretty manner, and Matty felt the color run over his face.

"He plays a piano when he's not fighting," Fat Lip said. "Sometimes gives a concert just after the semi-final. Look, Norma, suppose you give us a number. What'll it be?"

She shrugged, still looking at Matty. "What do you want to hear?"

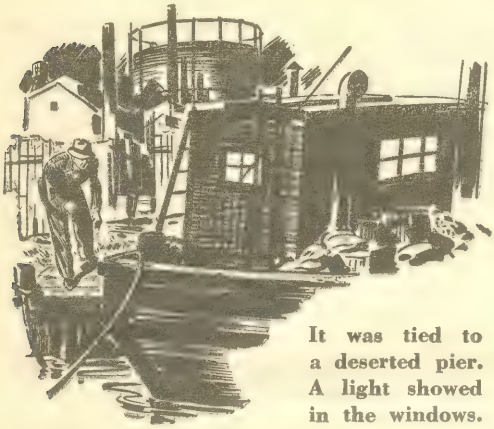
Matty was very serious. This was a beautiful girl, but this was also a very good band and he could not take a chance on souring it. He said, "Suppose we play 'Call Me Tomorrow'. We'll go through it once. You come in on the second chorus."

She said, "That'll be fine." She smiled at him again and he sat down quickly and nodded to the rest of them. "Let's take it easy."

They went into it softly, the rhythm slow and with a note of mourning, the brass coming in whisperingly at first, then with more authority. They went through it once. Matty looked at the girl and was a little confused to realize she had been looking at him.

He said, "Okay?" and she nodded.

The brass became muted, almost soundless, and she started to sing. Her voice was low and rich and wonderfully even and true, and Matty kept the piano quiet, letting her walk along the path of notes he merely defined. She



It was tied to a deserted pier. A light showed in the windows.

did a little trick near the end, put a high one where there was no high one, and Matty grinned at the perfection of the pitch. She finished it off:

"When each day for a week you said,
'Call me tomorrow,'
And only came 'round for the ten you
could borrow,
I knew we were through though you fed
me that line,
'Call me up, Baby, tomorrow at nine.'"

Matty sat there. He knew it was good but he didn't know just how good. He looked at the rest of them. They were grinning like a bundle of cats. Honey Harms was fishing in his case for a clarinet. He said, "We do it again. Halfway through the chorus I come in soft with the clarinet and George gets one chord out of that guitar. Then. . ."

Matty told the girl, "It's nice having you around."

Fat Lip beamed. "Do I ever give you a bum steer? Now, you take my Uncle Ralph. He—"

"We will take your Cousin Norma," Botsy said. "We will even take your brother-in-law. Your Uncle Ralph we will have nothing to do with."

"It would not be pleasant having anything to do with him," Fat Lip said. "He has been dead for nine years."

They waited a week while Gerry Silvers, the agent, tried to find a spot for them. Things seemed to be going well. The band was well knit, now, a smoothly working unit that turned out music with a happy lovely effortlessness. The girl was fine, the timbre of her voice suited admirably to their playing. Jake Apple had worked out a nice arrangement for 'Easy Money,' and Matty knew he had a fine outfit. Maybe things were going a bit too well. He went down to Stillman's gym one afternoon, thinking that a good workout might loosen him up, get the butterflies out of his head.

It was late and the place was all but deserted. He joked with the regulars who were still in attendance, worked on the bags and skipped rope until he was in a lather. He took a shower and got a rub and was just dressing when Baldy Gowan came in. Baldy shook his head. "A shame you lost, kid. They coulda called it either way."

Matty grinned at him. "You would have lost a lump."

Baldy shrugged. "It's happened before." He looked at Matty. "You seen Willie O'Keefe lately?"

"If I never see that guy again, I will donate a ten dollar bill to the Society for the Relief of Warm Elephants."

"He is not pleased with you for shoving him out of the ring that night," Baldy said. "His dignity is hurt. He goes around telling people you cannot do things like that to him."

"I can dropkick that little bum forty yards."

"Nevertheless," Buddy said, "I would keep my ear tuned to the ground and my eyes in the back of my head. Willie is not a nice person."

"That is like saying black is a little darker than white. But I know what you mean, Baldy, and I thank you."

"Willie has his nose in a lot of business, as you know. All phony business. He might be able to rough you up a little if you are not careful."

"I will be careful," Matty assured him.

He thought of Willie as he finished dressing. O'Keefe was a walking bit of meanness. Matty hated him for the jobs he had done on several fighters, matching them out of their class, working them far beyond their time, robbing them right and left. He knew that Willie, by an unhappy succession of miracles

and with the help of several doubtful lawyers, had managed to keep out of most of the jails in the country. He knew that his enterprises were many and unsavory and indistinctly shadowed. He also knew that he wanted nothing to do with the man.

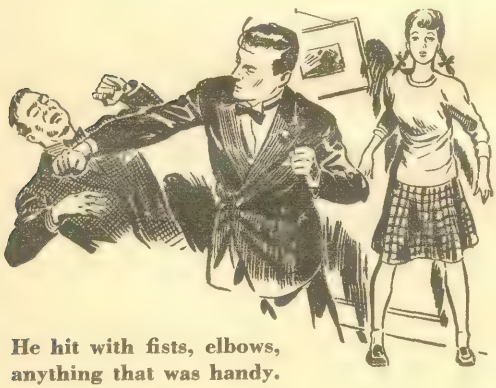
CHAPTER FOUR

MATTY came out of Stillman's and walked right into Norma Moran. She wore a nicely styled gray suit and a ridiculous small hat. Matty said, "Well. Imagine meeting you here."

She smiled in that way which almost frightened him. "It is a coincidence, isn't it? Fat Lip said you were working out down here and should be through about four o'clock." She glanced at her wrist watch. "You are three minutes late." She took his arm and said, "I'm hungry."

"The best thing to do in such a case is to eat."

They went over to Reuben's. They had



He hit with fists, elbows, anything that was handy.

sandwiches and coffee, and Matty talked.

She leaned forward a little. "You haven't said a word about my hat. Do you like my suit?" She sipped her coffee. "Do you think of nothing but the band?"

He said, "The hat and suit look very nice. Silvers said there might be something for us at the Wessex House."

She shrugged those lovely shoulders. "It's hopeless." She turned to him. "I've never been able to find out why a guy who was middleweight champion of the world could play a piano. I mean, play a piano as you do. And arranging. What's the story?"

"I took my lessons when I was a kid," Matty grinned. "It's a very long story. You wouldn't be interested."

"In anything concerning you I would be interested," the girl told him. "I think a girl should know all about her husband."

Matty said, "That seems reasonable." Then he turned to her. "What did you say?"

"About the musical part of your personality. How come boxing mixes with Brahms?"

"My father was a violinist," Matty said. A cloud darkened his eyes at the memory. "Played with the Philharmonic, the Boston Symphony. All the big ones. He was one of the best. When he was sober."

She stared at him. "It sounds very interesting."

He shook his head. "It isn't really." But he told her about it. He had never told anyone else, and she seemed to want to hear.

About his father, that kindly man with the heavenly talent. Perhaps one of the twenty finest violinists of his day. Not great, but almost great. His fingers had been strong, and his wrist had been strong, but there had been a bit of weakness in him somewhere. Too many dreams within his soul, too much strength in reality. Entirely unreliable, undependable, and charming. Occasional jobs, an increasing fondness for the bottle.

"In our house we had music," Matty remembered. "Hours of wonderful, magnificent music. But very little food. My father would drink and play, and he would teach us what he knew of music, but it was difficult for him to find work, for people knew of his weakness. My mother was a lovely gentle woman who adored my father. She had as little conception of reality as he did."

"He taught you piano?" Norma asked.

Matty shook his head. "Cianini taught me piano," and she raised her eyebrows. "He was a friend of my father."

He remembered those early days. Moving from one home to one less desirable, finally settling in a tenement where there was some possibility of meeting the rent. "I did the usual things to help. Sold papers, worked in stores—things like that. And four hours each evening at the piano. Father insisted. He sometimes played with me. I guess we might have been good."

"I'll bet you were wonderful," the girl said.

"But something had to be done, and when I got out of high school I somehow started fighting. I was strong and intelligent, and there was money in it. My father died, but there was my mother and my brother. So I stayed with it until the war came along. I'm through with it now. The last one was just to get some money to start the band with."

"Your mother and brother?"

"Mother died two years ago. My broth-

er . . ." He grimaced. "Not so good. I send him money when he asks for it. Which is a bit too often."

He suddenly discovered that Norma was holding his hand. She said, "Never you mind. After we're married we'll set your brother up in some sort of business, a delicatessen or something. When the band is going good—"

"The band!" Matty said desperately. "We have a rehearsal in two hours." He got up. "We'd better hurry."

Norma looked at him. "Of course we'd better hurry. Two hours to walk three blocks. We'll never make it."

THEY opened the next week at the Wessex House. Silvers said, "An excellent place, Matty. Yes, a very nice opportunity. A month's contract with an option for renewal if they like us." He gave Matty a figure and Matty agreed that the terms were very nice.

The opening was good, but Matty knew why most of the crowd was there. They wanted to see what sort of a freak band a former pug could have gathered around him. They wanted to see if he played the piano wearing boxing gloves. They came mostly out of curiosity. They stayed until closing to dance or to listen. They would not suffer the music to end.

They opened on a Friday night. On Saturday even the band had difficulty getting into the place. It was jam-packed, and from the opening bar of music the customers were approving and delighted. They were crazy about Norma. They were wild about Fat Lip. They went into ecstasies when Matty took a solo. They would not let him stop. He played two encores for them and when they yelled for more he looked at the unmoving throng jammed around the bandstand and gave them "Big City Blues." They settled for that and he called an intermission.

The band crowded around him. "What was that thing?" Fat Lip wanted to know, and Willy Wilson said, "I thought I'd heard them all but that is white-hat new to me."

Matty said, "It's called 'Big City Blues'."

Jake Apple said, "Of course it is. You can hear the subway running deep under Broadway, the milkwagon horses clopping along in the dawn. You can see the lights going on in the big buildings at night and the ferries crossing the river. You can almost smell the summer streets. But where the hell did you get it? Who wrote it?"

Matty said, "Well, I did."

They stared at him for a moment, and Harry Edwards wanted to know, "How come you didn't play it for us? How come we haven't got that thing on the sheets?"

"I wasn't sure you'd like it. I wasn't sure about it myself."

Honey Harms said excitedly, "There's a long stretch in there for a clarinet. I could kill that thing."

"You will make arrangements for it," Norma said. "You will sit up all night and work, and tomorrow is Sunday and you can work then. Fat Lip will help you. It is a fine business, holding out wonderful stuff like that on your own band. You have any other little things like that around the house?"

Matty was a little uncomfortable. "There are a couple of jobs I—"

"We will hear them," Norma said. "Sometimes I am afraid I am marrying a half-wit."

Tommy Wiltz said, "You two getting married? When?"

"Oh, I don't know just when," Norma said. "He hasn't said 'Yes' yet. He's putting up a tough fight. But I would say sometime around the first of the year." She linked her arm in Matty's. "Don't you think so, dear?"

Matty said, "Fat Lip, you should write to this girl's mother. Have her talk to Norma, tell her she can't go around speaking to men like this."

Norma bristled prettily. "I'd like to know why not!" She subsided. "Besides, mother wouldn't mind. She's been married five times. She understands these things. Men are just a little slow, a little hesitant."

Botsy shook his head. "That is a great little girl. As shy as a truck driver. And now I know where Edelbert got all his uncles."

Fat Lip descended on him. "I told you, Botsy—"

Matty interceded. "It's time to go on again."

He arranged "Big City Blues." They played it one night and the crowd stood around for a full minute afterward with their mouths hanging open, then almost tore the place apart. They put it on a record and it sold a million copies in a month.

Matty brought the others out of hiding. "The Morning That I Met You," "Don't Look Now" and a cute little number called "Why Don't You Look Where I'm Going?" that set the whole town singing.

Norma sang them beautifully. People from Hollywood came running after her, she had an early evening radio spot, someone with a lot of money wanted to put her into a musical at a fantastic salary.

She shook her head. "I like it here." She smiled at Matty. "I like it very much."

Matty said, "When I am old and bald maybe I will marry someone like you if you change. I like a quiet girl."

"I am very quiet," Norma said. "Let's go

for a walk in the park later. I will show you how quiet I can be."

"I am busy," Matty said. "Very busy."

They left the Wessex House after a three-months stay in spite of the entreaties of the management. Gerry Silvers had them booked in every city in the country, and they stayed no longer than two weeks in any one place. Silvers said, "It's just to spread the good word around. In a month or so we'll be able to pick any New York spot we want."

They sold it to delighted customers in Chicago, Detroit and all points west. They hit the Coast and played at the Mark Hopkins in San Francisco for two weeks. It was there, one night, after Norma had finished a wonderful job on "Big City Blues," that she stepped forward a bit and said, "I have a little announcement to make, and I hope it will make you as happy as it's making me." She looked over at Matty, at the piano, and continued, "Matty and I . . . that is Matty . . ."

Matty stepped forward quickly. "Norma's trying to tell you that we have another new song we'd like to try tonight." He said to her in a whisper, "I will call the police. You cannot persecute me like this."

She smiled at him sweetly. "It will do you no good. I am a true daughter of my mother. It's only a matter of time."

So Matty played a thing he'd been working on. He called it "Since You've Been Gone," and they loved it.

At the intermission Fat Lip said, "Matty, I apologize for all the ill manners of my family. The Philadelphia branch is ill bred. I thought you were a goner out there tonight." Then he said, "Why don't you marry the girl. She's nice enough, and the Philadelphia branch of the family has its looks. I—"

"What branch of the family are you from?" Botsy wanted to know.

"The Philadelphia branch."

Matty said, "She's a very nice girl. She sings beautifully and she is very lovely to look at. But I am a busy guy. We open at the Capamount in New York in three weeks. This is no time for love."

They opened in New York, at the Capamount, and the huge theater was packed to the doors for every performance. They introduced a few new numbers, dressed up the older ones. They were a beautiful, interlocking group of musicians, by this time. No talent was slighted, no effort withheld. As soon as he had regained his initial investment, Matty had made the band a cooperative thing, and everyone was making a hatful of money. He and Fat Lips and Botsy had chosen the men with temperaments as well as abilities in mind, and they all got along together wonderfully.

Matty loved the music they put out. He sat there at the piano and let it roll around him, and life was a good and happy thing. He coaxed tunes out of the keyboard and it responded in a kindly fashion to his treatment.

Norma sang, beautiful and lowdown, and the band guided the tune gently and softly. Honey Harms let his clarinet sing directly with her, but in a sweet whisper. They were really something to hear.

They were booked for two weeks, and at the end of that time the stay was renewed for another month. Matty was very happy. Norma said, "I think maybe tomorrow night, at the evening show, I will make the announcement I flubbed in Frisco."

Matty said, "Tonight I am sending a telegram to your mother."

"You get mother up here and you'll *really* have trouble. She adores prize fighters."

"I am no prize fighter."

"You will do until one comes along. I never told you, but I saw that Gomez fight. You were robbed."

"You're prejudiced."

"Very," she said. "And determined. Also very."

CHAPTER FIVE

THERE was one fly in their ointment. Playing at the Capamount with them on a personal tour, was a young man named Wally Joyce. Handsome in a sickly sort of way, he'd had several minor roles in what turned out to be good pictures.

Wally Joyce brought out all the bobby-soxers in town and the resentment of everyone with whom he came in contact. He was conceited to an amazing degree and spoke of little but "my pictures." An arrangement had been made, in a bad moment, Matty thought, whereby Joyce sang a number with the band. His voice was not too bad, but his manners were insufferable. He told them exactly how he wanted the song played, treated them as if he were Toscanini leading the Eighth Ward Band.

"He's only here for a week," Matty consoled them, "and then he moves on."

"That's what they say about the locusts," Norma put in. "I'm surprised he doesn't have a stronger voice, he has such wolfish instincts. Every time I pass near him he suddenly becomes an octopus. If they handed out in a week as many passes to the show as he has made at me in two days, none of us would

make a penny. He is extremely annoying."

Matty said, "You mean . . ."

Norma told him, "I mean."

"I will speak to Mr. Joyce."

She positively glowed. "Why, darling! I do believe you are jealous!"

Matty shook his head and grinned at her. "I just don't like having the members of my band annoyed. The performance suffers."

He spoke to Joyce just before the next show. The man was half a head taller than Matty but thinned by dissipation. Matty said, "Look, Joyce, you do not amuse Miss Moran. Stay away from her."

Joyce's smile was an unpleasant thing. "You should know her tastes, traveling back and forth across the country with her."

"And that," Matty said, "will be enough of that. You just keep your pretty mouth closed, both to me and to Miss Moran. I do not like you. I think it would please me to see you with a few less teeth."

Joyce sneered. "Just what one would expect a cheap pug to say. Just because I'm not in the best of shape at the moment . . ."

"I wouldn't touch you with a ten-foot pole," Matty said, "but I'd turn Botsy loose on you." Botsy's aggregate of inches had been barely acceptable to the Army.

Joyce turned away. "I'll talk to whom I please, Chase. It will take more than a threat to frighten me." He walked off, and Matty turned and noticed that half the stagehands had overheard the squabble. One electrician said, "Why didn't you put the slug on him, Matty? The guy is really a smeller."

Matty grinned. "This is better. This way he'll behave and I won't be tried for murder."

He thought of those words some three hours later. He was changing to street clothes when Botsy came in. The little guy said, "Well, Joyce won't bother Norma any more."

"I don't think he will," Matty said. "I spoke to him about it."

"Someone was more annoyed with the bum than you, pal. Joyce is now sitting in his dressing room with a fine big knife jammed through his throat. He will never bother nobody."

Matty turned to him. "You're kidding."

"Take a look in the corridor. If you think all those guys in the blue uniforms are Western Union messengers, you're crazy."

It was true. There were police backstage, busy with notebooks, and as he passed the door of Joyce's dressing room Matty saw the police photographers setting up their equipment. Joyce sat in front of his dressing table, slumped forward slightly. The knife was very evident.

Botsy said, "Of that picture he will be the undisputed star. But he won't like it."

They were about to pass the room when a tall man stopped them. "Mr. Chase?"

Matty nodded, and the man said, "I'm Inspector Brady. You mind stepping in here for a moment?"

Matty went in, Botsy at his heels. The inspector said, "I'd like to ask you a few questions. You don't have to answer them if you don't want to."

From the opening bar, they were a sensation. The crowd went into ecstasies, wouldn't let them stop.

Matty shrugged. "I don't see why I should object."

"You knew Joyce well?"

Matty shook his head. "I never saw him before five days ago." He was only two or three feet away from the body, out of the line of the cameras. He looked at the mess, noticed that whoever had handled the knife had done a very workmanlike job. He stared for a moment while his heart came up into his mouth, then faced the inspector again.

"You had a quarrel with him this evening, I hear," Brady stated.

Matty said, "The guy was a wolf. He was annoying the singer in my band. I told him to lay off."

Brady had cynical eyes. "That was all?"

Matty nodded. "That was all." He defeated the urge to turn and look at Joyce again.

The inspector took Matty's address, and Botsy's, which were the same, and told them, "Don't leave the city. You'll probably be called to the inquest."

They picked up Fat Lip and Norma and went over to Pete's for the steaks they had reserved. They sat at a corner table and Fat Lip said, "If someone had to get stuck in the gullet, I can think of no better target."

Botsy said unfeelingly, "He was the sort of a guy who had it coming, one way or another. Sooner or later someone would have shot him, or pushed him out a window, or something."

Norma winced. "Have a little respect for the dead."

"Why?" Fat Lip wanted to know.

Botsy turned to Matty. "You are very silent, my friend."

"I am very scared," Matty told them. They looked at him questioningly. "That was my knife," he said.

THEY stared at him, and their silence was a shocked, incredulous thing.

Botsy broke it finally. "Gee, Matty, I didn't know you were *that* sore at the guy. You shoulda—"

"Don't be stupid, Botsy," Norma cut in. She said to Matty, "Are you sure it was yours? How did you know?"

"I was only about two feet away from the guy. I had a good look at the knife. It was mine, all right." He turned to Fat Lip and Botsy. "A little over a year ago, in the fighting up north of Livorno, you remember I picked up a German trench knife? It was heavy, and sharp as a razor. I remember we kidded about it. Either of you guys remember it?"

Fat Lip snapped his fingers. "A week later you put it up for two bucks in a dice game. I remember the thing."

"How do you know it was the same knife?" Norma wanted to know.

"I carved my initials in the handle. A fine big 'M.C.' I looked at Joyce and the thing practically said 'Hello' to me. I'm surprised the police didn't notice it." He thought about that. "I don't suppose they would have noticed it at first, though. The initials weren't cut deeply, and dirt had filled them in a bit. I saw them because I knew the knife. I unconsciously looked for them."

"So how did it get in Joyce's throat?" Fat Lip asked no one in particular. "You didn't put it there?" He looked at Matty, then said, "Okay, you didn't put it there."

Norma asked, "When did you last see the knife? Did you have it at the apartment?"

Matty tried to think. He sat there, feeling very stupid, trying to recall the last time he had seen that damned knife.

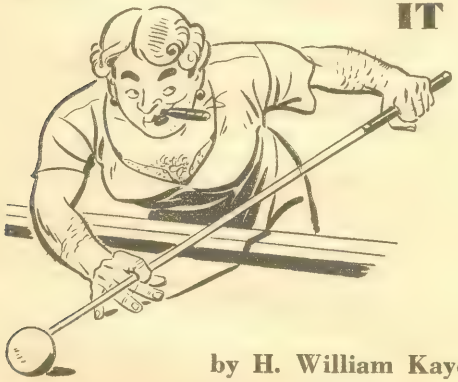
He finally shrugged. "I'm almost sure I never had the thing in the apartment. I can't even remember bringing it back from overseas."

Norma insisted. "You're sure it was your knife?"

"I couldn't be mistaken about it," Matty said miserably. "I wish I weren't so sure."

Botsy sat with his head in his hands, his face a study in misery. "If you had really sliced the guy, I wouldn't mind so much. It wouldn't be so bad. (*Continued on page* 137)

IT ACTUALLY HAPPENED



by H. William Kaye

Ed Linke of the Washington Senators, pitching against the New York Yankees, was hit on the head by a batted ball. The pellet bounced back to the catcher, who quickly threw it to second base to chalk up an amazing double play.

In all of Jack Britton's twenty-six years as a professional fighter, twenty of his ring battles were fought with one man, the famous Kid Lewis.

Gus Simmons ran a temperature of 102 degrees during an ice-cake-sitting contest in Chicago.

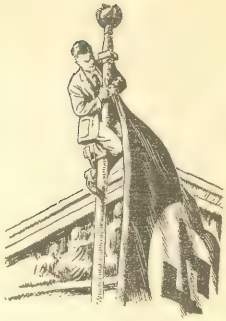
Two Russians, Miehalko Goniusz and Wasyl Bezborodny, engaging in a new type of sport, slapped each other's face for thirty-six hours. The contest ended in a draw.

For twenty-five years, the world's woman billiard championship was maintained by a man. The title was held under the name of Miss Francis Anderson, who was in reality Orie F. Anderson of Newton, Kansas. He had fooled everyone with his female impersonation.

Duke Dougherty, of Denver, Colorado, rode up Pike's Peak (14,108 feet above sea level) on a bicycle in less than two hours.

At the age of seventy-five, Gus Sundstrom swam a distance of 225 feet under water with a lighted cigar in his mouth. Emerging to the surface, the butt was still lit.

Bill Stern's Corner



WHERE the next Olympic Games will be held—and when!—it's still too early to speculate. In the meantime I'd like to tell a story of two of America's greatest Olympic champions. Let's turn the pages of sports history back to 1938, and the Olympic Games in Berlin.

Among America's entries was a sensational runner, Jesse Owens of Ohio State University. Earlier that year Owens had broken three records in the Big Ten track meet, creating new world marks in the 220-yard dash, the 220-yard low hurdles and the broad jump, and had tied the record for the hundred-yard dash.

Hitler and his "supermen" resolved that the great colored star must be stopped. The Nazis had a comparatively good broad jumper named Lutz Long. They believed that with a little help from Nazi Olympic officials, Long could out-jump Owens.

On his first day of Olympic competition Jesse won the one hundred-meter dash with ease. The following day he captured the two hundred-meter event. A few minutes later he walked over to the broad-jump pit.

To measure his stride, Jesse jogged down the broad-jump lane. Just before he reached the take-off spot, he stopped and turned to go back. A German official shouted "Foul!" That meant the great Negro star had only two more tries to make the qualifying distance of twenty-three and a half feet.

On the next try, a magnificent leap carried Jesse almost twenty-five feet, but once more the Nazi stooge cried "Foul!"—claiming that Owens had stepped over the line again. Jesse protested—so did the United States officials. But the decision stood.

Larry Snyder, Ohio State's track coach, called Jesse to one side and whispered to him. Owens nodded and prepared to make his final jump.

Down the lane he streaked, and left the ground a good eighteen inches before the take-off board. There could be no question of legality. And he landed three feet past the qualifying line. Then a few minutes later, in the finals, he rocketed down the take-off lane and jumped more than twenty-six feet—enough to beat his German opponent by a margin of two feet—and win a third Olympic title!

It is customary for the ruler of the nation which is host—in this case Hitler—personally to present the victor with his medal. But when it came time for Jesse Owens to receive his awards, there was no Hitler! He had walked out, feigning illness.

On that same Olympic track team with the great Jesse Owens was another star runner—Lou Zamperini. He was a great collector of souvenirs. One day while strolling through the streets of Berlin, Zamperini stopped in front of Hitler's chancellery. There, on top of a flagpole, was Hitler's personal flag!

Marching up and down the street in front of Hitler's hangout were two columns of Nazi soldiers. Young Lou eyed the parading soldiers, at the same time staring longingly at the flag. What a souvenir it would make for his collection! Waiting until the guards were almost out of sight, he made a dash for the flagpole, climbed up and seized the flag.

Rifle shots filled the air as he slid down the pole. On the ground, he was surrounded by soldiers, knocked down and beaten unmercifully. Suddenly a voice cried, *"Halten sie."*

The guards snapped to attention. Standing there was General Werner von Fritsch, Commander in Chief of the German Army! The German officer inquired: "What are you doing here, boy?"

"Nothing," replied Lou. "I am a member of the American Olympic team. I collect souvenirs, and I thought Hitler's flag would be unusual to have!"

The general dismissed the soldiers and said, "What you have just done is *punishable here by death!*" He then tossed the remnants of the flag at Lou and walked away.

Back in the United States after the Olympics, Zamperini set records in the mile run which are still standing. Later, as a bombardier in the Army Air Force, he was frequently cited for gallantry, and last February, during the indoor track season, the IC-4A Mile was renamed the Lou Zamperini Invitation Mile.

UNRECONVERTED Champ

by William Fay

THE man and the small boy drove down through the New Jersey hills to the village of Primrose in the valley. It was just a few miles and the man drove without haste. He kept biting his lips with indecision and looking at the boy on the seat beside him.

"Should I be going?" he asked himself. The answer was that he was going there anyhow, as though an impulse separate from sound reason were compelling him to go.

"What the hell," he said aloud. "Why not? Five thousand dollars isn't cornflakes. And what am I afraid of?"

"You say something, Pop?"

"Nothing, Joey. Just it's a nice day, don't you think?"

The small, mud-spattered coupe passed through the quaint and shaded Main Street of the village where the elm trees rose to twice the height of the picturesque houses and the few stores. The day was fine after the morning rain. The man remembered the little town with mingled emotions.

"I want a Dixie cup," said Joey.

"In a minute, chum—any minute now."

He wondered if he should have taken the kid. Suppose everybody started swearing and lifting a large stink all at once? It wouldn't be a nice thing for the kid to hear. It wouldn't be a nice thing for him to bring home to his mother. But he continued to drive on a quarter of a mile past the village to a lakeside establishment which a big sign proclaimed to be DITMAR'S TRAINING CAMP. To supplement the sign, a large banner had been strung across the road from tree to tree. On the banner it said:

LEFTY DANIELS TRAINS HERE DAILY
ADMISSION 75c

Six bits just to look at the bum, the man thought. Oh, well, he grudgingly admitted, the guy is something to look at.

He parked the coupe by a big wooden pavilion. The pavilion and training arena were on one side of the road, near the lake. Across the road, opposite, were the main house and cottages, where the camp personnel, sparmates and newspaper boys, if any, were usually housed.

"Is this the place?" said Joey.

"Yes, this is it." The boy's father wondered why his stomach turned over slowly and the blood ran up his arms to leave his hands damp and almost without feeling. From the arena he could hear the *slap-slap-bang* of a small punching bag being punished.

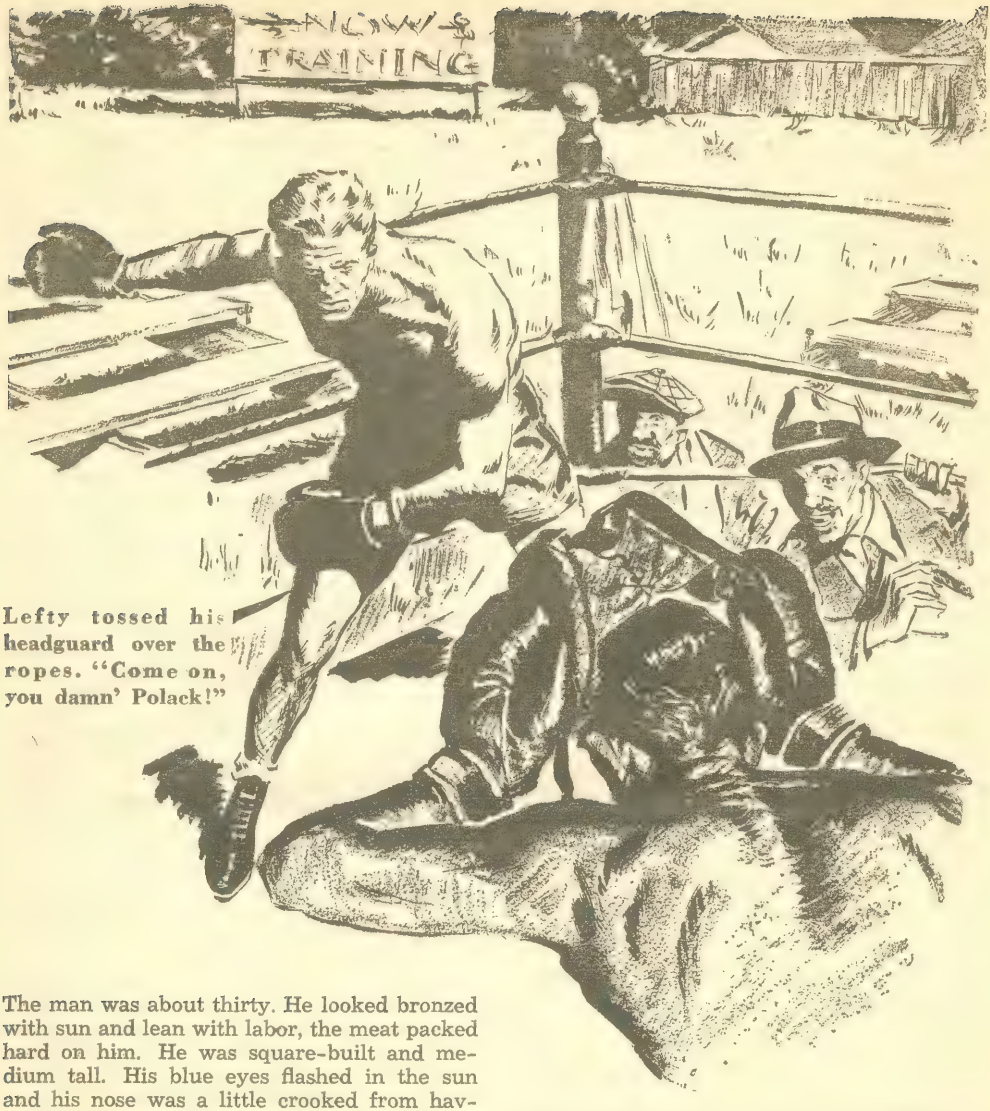
"Could you fight a walrus, Pop?"

"Well, I dunno, Joey, but there was a time."

They got out of the coupe. The little boy was pleased to be going some place, any place. His little body was straight and strong and beautiful. His hair was gold and like his mother's. He was a precious bloom that made the heart ache because you knew the seasons of exquisite beauty must be brief.

The man urged him through the pavilion door with a wave of his hand, then followed.

Vic Kovaks, retired, undefeated champion, felt he had left one ring chore undone



Lefty tossed his headguard over the ropes. "Come on, you damn' Polack!"

The man was about thirty. He looked bronzed with sun and lean with labor, the meat packed hard on him. He was square-built and medium tall. His blue eyes flashed in the sun and his nose was a little crooked from having been punched somewhat more than noses are supposed to be punched. He looked pleasant and tough, and he was both of these things, having been, up to the moment of his retirement, the middleweight champion of the world.

A NICKEL-EATING phonograph blared "Sentimental Journey" as he walked in with Joey. It was cool, and the beer smelled newly tapped; electric fans whirred quietly as polite-mannered bees. He was glad to see the Greek at the bar.

"Vic!" the Greek said, as though he didn't believe it. "This is like old times, boy." The Greek put down his towel and walked out from behind the bar. The Greek was a tall man with a suspect lung who worked year-round for Charlie Ditmar at the camp.

"It's great to see you, Paul," Vic Kovaks said. "This is my kid Joey."

Paul the Greek shook hands solemnly with Joey and said, "A fine lookin' kid."

Joey pulled at his father's pants and said, "Dixie cup?"

"I'll give 'im a small beer," the Greek said.

"You kiddin'?"

"Well, lemon soda we got." The Greek went back of the bar and produced a bottle of pop.

"How's the champ?" Vic asked.

"You mean Lefty? He ain't champ yet. The fight's still three weeks away."

"He will be," Vic said.

"You know that, huh?" The Greek was drawing a beer.

"I'm not stupid," Vic said. "Hernandez is a good boy, but Lefty'll knock him out. How's Lefty behaving?"

"He's snotty," the Greek said. "How else'd he be? He'll be hot this time, and Ditmar's bettin' the joint on 'im."

"Ditmar won't have to worry," Vic said. "McCord should do fine too. This fight'll draw." He sipped the cool beer and it was good. He leaned on the bar and gave nickels to Joey, who fed them to the phonograph.

Vic wondered when Neal McCord, Lefty's manager, would come in. He could not help wondering what Neal would say when he saw him standing there, and how heavily a matter of five thousand dollars sat on Neal McCord's conscience. Not too heavily, he was sure.

"I said," the Greek repeated, "that you was smart to quit when you did."

"Meaning what?"

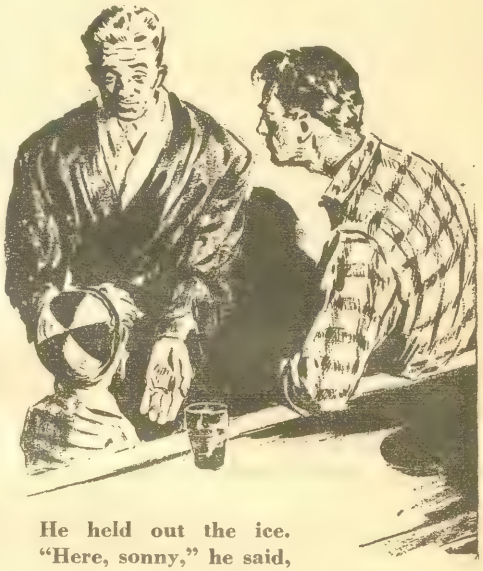
"Oh, what the hell do you think?" said the honest Greek. "Lefty'd beat your brains out. You're no kid no more."

"You think so?" Vic said.

He thought so himself, but he didn't like hearing it. It was the reason he had quit. He had lost, after three years of war, all interest in being punched around. He had hated the war because it destroyed things. He had been with a division of engineers—a sweating, creative group of men whose business it had been to build and not destroy. In the war he had worked with his hands and his brains and with an inherent mechanical skill. He had learned to lead men and to help them. He used books and mathematics as much as he used his muscles. In the Army he had begun to dream of when he would come home and what he would do. He had some money, not too much, but almost enough. A fight or two in defense of his title and he would have more than enough.

His obsession with building and his distaste for the prize-ring grew. The prize-ring was, after all, a long war of attrition: punches on heads, like sledges on stone, produced the inevitable result. He wanted none of it. Least of all did he want any of Lefty Daniels, the logical contender for his crown. None of this, of course, would he admit, but his father-in-law, a logical and thrifty Irishman, had offered to provide ten thousand dollars towards the business enterprise. "You kin call it the 'Champeen Constrooktion Cumpeny' today, son," Mr. Fitzgerald had said, "because you *are* a champeen, but what would you call it when that left-handed feller—that what's-his-name—got through with you? Think it over and let me know."

NOW, at the bar, he wished the Greek were not so damned smart. He *had* retired; he *had* acted wisely, but there was an aftertaste that was not pleasant—a champion doesn't like to retire beneath a cloud. A champion setting aside his gloves was supposed to imply that there are no additional worlds waiting to be conquered.



He held out the ice. "Here, sonny," he said, "go freeze your guts."

"You done the right thing, Vic," the Greek said with irritating sureness. "You got a wife an' family. Thirty, forty, fifty grand for fightin' Lefty'd never of bought you a new set of brains. That's what Lefty's sore about."

"Lefty's sore?"

"Sore about you didn't fight 'im for the title. He don't like to win it in no lousy elimination tournament after you throw it away. An' second, he never liked you."

"Well, we never went out dancing together," Vic admitted. "I've never given the bum two thoughts."

That was a lie. He had given Lefty Daniels two thousand thoughts since his own discharge from the Army. A few months before, as a sort of experiment, he had worked out with Lefty at Stillman's Gym. Two rounds they had boxed. Lefty was a kind of southpaw shotgun. He pulled the trigger on that portside bomb and you were dead. He was

twenty-four years old and tough as a twelve-day march through barbed wire. Vic was thirty, and well beyond his prime, but by virtue of vast experience he had escaped from the two-round ordeal with grace. Also, he had come out of it with the conviction that he should retire while the retiring was good.

"Forget I ever mentioned it, Vic," the Greek said now. "I didn't know you was sensitive. Listen, I'm for you a hunnerd percent. How'd you happen to come by here?"

"I'm working up at the reservoir about four miles from here," Vic said briefly. That he was boss of a construction company was his own business, he thought.

"Oh." The Greek looked at Vic's clothes, which might easily be those of a pick-and-

Illustrated by Ernest Chiriacka

shovel guy. He was about to say something else when Neal McCord came in, followed by Lefty Daniels, in training togs, with a towel tossed over his shoulders. The Greek began to wipe the bar.

"Well, what the hell do you know?" said Neal McCord. He was a rangy, good-looking man, with a soft white face very seldom exposed to sunlight. His eyes were Broadway-sharp, and he was a fairly nice guy, with ethics picked up in a poolroom at the age of fourteen. "Vickie! This *is* a surprise!" They shook hands.

Lefty Daniels shuffled over in his soft training shoes. "If it ain't the Polack," Lefty said. "How are you, *champ?*"

"I'm fine," Vic said, but his stomach was hollow and the blood drained out of his arms again. He didn't like to be called "The Polack" and he didn't like the way that Lefty had said *"champ."* He watched Lefty go behind the bar and help himself to a piece of ice. Lefty held the ice in a bandaged hand and sucked on it. Slowly, he walked around in front of the bar, glancing at Joey. "Your kid?" he asked. Vic nodded.

"My father could fight a lion," said Joey. It was a flat statement, not meant to be denied. Vic wished just now that Joey would be quiet.

"Your old man tells some great stories," Lefty said. "Here's a piece of ice for you, sonny; go freeze your guts."

Joey turned, puzzled, to his father. "Pop, didn't you ever fight a lion?"

"Sure," said Vic, "with two heads." He felt his face grow crimson. He glanced from adult to adult, trusting they would support him. Only Lefty howled rudely.

"Your old man tucked his tail between his legs three months ago," he said to Joey. "Whatcha doin' now, *champ*—diggin' ditches?"

"Shut up!" Vic snapped.

"Sock 'im, Pop," said Joey, though his face was pale. He seemed on the verge of tears.

"So let's not be children," Neal McCord intervened. "Let's break it up. Get going, Lefty, get yourself a sweat. Two rounds with Packy. He's waiting for you and I'll be right down."

"This lousy Polack," Lefty said.

"Did you hear me?" McCord demanded. He had a way with bums. "Get going," he said.

Lefty took the towel from his shoulders and dragged it across the floor. He made his way slowly to the arena next to the pavilion where the training ring was pitched.

A NICE boy," Vic said.

"I don't have to live with him," McCord said. "I manage him and it's a living. It doesn't have to bother old friends. How's everything, Vic?"

It was the sort of moment Vic was waiting for. It was about time he brought up the subject of the five thousand dollars. "Things are this way, that way," he said. "I could use some dough, Neal."

McCord lit a cigarette. "Who couldn't?" he said evasively. "Have a beer?"

"No, thanks, Neal. But how about that five grand you owe me?"

Well, it was said now; and it was funny, he thought, how even when guys beat you out of dough, it was still, for him, an embarrassing subject to bring up.

"Five grand?" McCord managed to look astonished. "You're serious, Vickie? You mean

that deal we were in on? Why, chum, you know better than that. The damned saloon failed—we went bankrupt."

Vic tapped his fingers on the bar. "You went bankrupt out the back window with a bag of greenbacks, Neal. I saw the original books—not the phony ones you substituted."

"Vic, pal—you're serious?"

"That business didn't fail," Vic said. "You had horse trouble and blonde trouble and you needed a bundle quick. Right?" He watched the other man smile slowly. "But don't think I'm sore, Neal," he added. "Hell, you're the nicest crook I know."

"Sure—we've been friends for years," McCord said blandly.

"Of course, Neal—and you only steal from friends when you can't stick anyone else."

"That's what I like about you, Vic. You see both sides of the question. That's why we're such friends." He had a way of making you feel cheap whenever you mentioned money.

"Some day," Vic said, "you'll see one side of a jail—the inside. Now, listen, no fooling, Neal."

"We won't talk business now," McCord said. "It's a great day. Let's go down and see how Lefty's doing. C'mon, pal," he said to Joey.

VIC, unable to do anything else, strolled after McCord and his son, who seemed to like the slippery gentleman a good deal. Later I'll talk to him, Vic resolved.

The arena was a compact affair with tiered seats rising from the ring, capable of seating five hundred on a busy Sunday. Today, however, it was not open to the public.

They walked down a narrow aisle between the seats. Joey walked cross-wise on the benches, exploring the premises. On the apron of the ring, legs dangling, sat Lefty Daniels. Packy Carpenter sat glumly on a bench. There was no sign of mayhem.

"This is a training camp," said McCord. "You boys discussing the weather?"

"He don't feel good," Lefty said, nodding to his spar-mate.

"He's not supposed to feel good," said McCord. "He gets paid ten dollars a round for feeling perfectly awful. What's the matter?"

"Fish cakes," Packy said dolefully and tried to look sicker. Vic wondered how much Lefty was paying him.

"We figured," Lefty said, "since Packy don't feel so good maybe the *champ* would like to go a couple rounds. Huh, champ?"

"The answer," said McCord, "is 'No.' You're about as subtle as a kick in the pants, Lefty. You can take it out on Hernandez three weeks from tonight if you feel so tough."

Vic, his knees strangely unsteady, the sweat standing out on him, called, "Joey!" He glanced once at Daniels. The challenge was real and difficult to evade. It called for a more substantial reply than a shrug of the shoulders, a wise remark. "Joey," Vic said when the boy appeared, "here's a quarter. Go up to the pavilion till I call you."

"Why?" Joey asked.

"Because I'm telling you," he said and the child went, reluctantly, looking back over his shoulder. Because I don't want you to see your old man make a bum of himself, he thought privately. He watched the boy go. He saw Charlie Ditmar come into the arena. He turned to Lefty.

"How about it, Polack?" Lefty said. "A coupla rounds, just for a gag?"

"Don't call me 'Polack', you preliminary punk."

Lefty controlled himself. There was hatred and calculation in his face. "Don't get excited," he said. "You were a champion up to the time you turned turkey. You wanna box me two rounds? Or do you wanna go home an' tell your jerky kid about the time you fought them three dragons in a bathtub?"

Somehow, it seemed less strange than inevitable. Vic asked himself now if he hadn't driven down from the construction camp with some subconscious desire pushing him inescapably toward this?

He took a deep breath and blew it out slowly. He walked over to Packy Carpenter and said, "Gimme your trunks and shoes."

McCord didn't like it. "Listen, Vic," he said, "you don't have to do this—don't be a slob. You haven't had a glove on for months."

"We didn't have to fight Hitler, either," Vic said. "We could have given 'im the Western Hemisphere instead." He wished his arms would stop shaking while he tied the laces of the shoes. He had gone two rounds with Lefty once before. For two rounds he should be able to outsmart him, make him miss, though in his heart he knew it would be different this time—very different.

Charlie Ditmar, a fat and worrisome man, made sure that Vic wore a protective cup. He tied the strap of the headguard under Vic's chin and laced on the gloves "You could get paid for this," said Ditmar. "You must be out of your mind. You're in no shape."

Lefty, already in the ring, tugged at his headguard and tossed his gloves impatiently at thin air. Vic went up the three short steps, slipped through the ropes and rubbed his shoes in the resin. Two rounds, he thought. Well, it's a good thing it isn't more.

He leaned back against the ropes to gain the feel of things. His body, naked above

the waist, was lean from labor, dark from sun. He saw Lefty glance at him once, seeking to appraise his condition. The hell with Lefty, he thought, and spat over the ropes. He was ready, but he was also grateful that Joey wasn't there to see it. Later, he would think of some convenient, explanatory lie. It was as important as life itself to both of them that the kid continue to believe his old man was invincible—a champion in fact.

CHARLIE DITMAR rang the bell. Vic moved casually away from the ropes. He was steady now. After all, this kind of thing had been his business, and, for better or worse, he was at home. He drew his head away from Lefty's wild lead and smashed a right hand home to the body. He shoved Lefty off, as though with disdain, then flicked an annoying left hand to his nose. He kept moving, moving, moving all the time. Two rounds are only six minutes, he reminded himself.

He never saw the punch that dropped him. The ring floor simply came up to meet him. He hit hard but he didn't take a count. There was no referee, no one to render a count. There was just Lefty, in a corner, with a pleased grin on his face. Vic shook his head to clear it. The hot sun beat against the canvas so that it almost burned his flesh. He got up.

"Maybe two rounds is too much," said Lefty. "Eh, Neal?"

"Stop bragging, you sadist," McCord told him.

Vic said nothing. He got up and walked back into the enemy's waiting guns. The practical way to fight one of these southpaw freaks, he knew, was to rip right hands at any available spot. He drilled his right glove clean to Lefty's chin. He felt the strong impact of the punch, Moreover, he felt Lefty stumble and hold—a sign that the man had been hurt. But Lefty was fiercely strong in the clinch. His power was vibrant—you could feel it radiating from his flesh. Vic pushed him off and saw the blood run down in a narrow stream from Lefty's mouth. They maneuvered cagily before they clashed again. They looked at each other across the small space separating them. There was no crowd-roar to heighten and accompany their effort. There were only the whispering sounds of their soft shoes on the canvas and the light wind walking through the trees.

People who merely watch fights cannot know how lonely it can be in a ring—how clear and focused the challenge is to the man who fights unaided, with his hands alone, with diminishing breath, with lessening strength.

Back at the construction camp, Vic knew, it wasn't like this. Back at the camp were his friends and his wife and decent work to do. The challenge was different—you built; you did not destroy. You turned at day's end to your wife and kids. Then some of the boys came over at night to play cards and Mary would serve them sandwiches and drinks. You talked over the job for tomorrow, and you knew, all of you together, that you would not fight alone against the task, and that the reservoir's problem would be licked. The contrast to this self-inflicted strife of the prize-ring, this hopeless, lonely struggle with animal pride, was enough to drain the heart of hope. . . .

Now Lefty surged back savagely. There wasn't time for thought. There was only time to fight. Vic stayed in close and punched away. He chose not to expose himself to the long-range thunderbolts that Lefty was capable of throwing. He heaved with effort and his legs were not too steady under him. A hard glove smashed against his mouth and he could taste the blood on his lips. He blinked his sweated eyelids, clamped his jaws. He heard the bell clang sharply, granting him reprieve.

He dropped his hands, at the bell, but Lefty smashed at him again. His brain seemed to explode. He grasped for Lefty and momentarily held. Charlie Ditmar, at the bell, kept clanging it, and through the din Vic could

Mary's breath was warm against his bruised face. "It's all right," she said.

hear the shouted oaths of Neal McCord. Still Lefty kept pumping punishment at him.

Vic blinked away the fog that bound him. He knew he was in a fight where compromise was out. He hooked his left hand to Lefty's chin; he followed the punch with another and another and his heart surged suddenly within him as Lefty backed, hurt and shocked, to the ropes, with a new respect.

McCord screamed at Lefty from the apron of the ring, "You maniac! Didn't you hear the bell?"

"I heard it, yeah," said Lefty. "I heard it, Neal, but don't you try to stop this thing—you hear?" Lefty tugged at his headguard, tossed it over the ropes. "Come on, you damn Polack," he said.

Vic scaled his own headguard between the second and third strands of rope. He walked in with mincing steps. Somewhere behind him he heard a high voice shrilling, "Come on, Pop! Kill 'im, Pop!"

How long he fought he would never know, because he looked through a red mask at the man before him. All he knew was that his legs had not collapsed and that he still was throwing punches. He thought most of Joey, who was watching the old man fight.

Lefty's gloves were soggy with sweat, grown hard. Vic wiped the blood from his eyes and moved in. It was wiser to press the attack than to run from it. In-fighting was closer to his personal talents and helped to offset the younger man's greater speed. But he was tired—so tired. He walked in sand. They had fought, he knew, since before the beginning of time.

He pressed Lefty to the ropes. Lefty backed off, measured him, then took a clean shot at his chin. Vic took the blow rather than evade it—what the hell, hadn't he taken everything that Lefty was able to throw? He grinned and spat on the canvas and he observed that Lefty no longer grinned.

Vic reached down deep into the impoverished vault of his own strength. He said, "Let's fight a little longer, Lefty. I'm beginning to like it—are you?" He weaved under Lefty's lead and cracked a hard right to his mouth.

He heard commotion in the arena, but didn't turn around; the task was before him. He heard friendly voices calling, "Get 'im, Vickie! Finish the bum!"

His own crowd from the construction camp, he knew. How the hell had they got here? He didn't know, but he saw Lefty waver and he was grateful that he had a measure of fighting left in himself for the sake of the boys. Was Mary here, too?

But how could you tell at a time like this? Here was Lefty, and Lefty tried once more. Lefty heaved his Sunday shots. Vic took them, wavering, nearly falling—took them on rubber legs but managed, somehow, to stay on his feet.

Now we go, he thought—the time is now. He pressed the attack. Lefty fell back from a right hand, seeking to cover up. Lefty's eyes darted in panic from Vic to Neal McCord outside the ring. "Fight, you clown," McCord said savagely. "We can't afford to get licked!"

Vic grinned and stayed in close. He blessed the years of experience that served him in his need. He tore the guts out of Lefty, and Lefty folded, wilted slowly on the ropes—lay for a moment on the strands, his long arms lacking the power to raise themselves.

Vic took a hungry breath of afternoon air and teed off. The soggy glove hit Lefty on the chin. Lefty's eyes rolled oddly and he fell, face forward. Vic backed away and watched. Vic circled slowly, holding himself erect. He never knew for sure if Lefty could have gotten up. He felt that he might have, had he tried. The important thing was that he did not.

VIC climbed, none too steadily, from the ring to waiting hands. His friends dumped a pail of water over his head, then allowed him to rest, stretched horizontal on a bench. Mary, his wife, sat looking at him, wanting to understand. "It was what you wanted, wasn't it?" she said finally.

Vic nodded that it was.

"Then it's all right," Mary said. The sun was in her hair and she looked lovely. Her hands were blessedly gentle on the bruised parts of his face. He sat up. Her arms went around him, and her breath was warm against his bruised face.

"What brought you all down here?" Vic asked her after a while. "You couldn't have known. I just sneaked down to sort of look things over."

"Someone telephoned the camp that you were in trouble," she said. "The man from the pavilion, I believe."

"You mean the Greek?"

"I don't know his name, darling, but he was watching the beginning of your little affair with Lefty from a window. Joey was with him and Joey told him the name of the construction company. We made it in about five minutes—all of us."

"Well, whatta you know?" Vic said.

"My father," said Joey to everyone, "could fight an elephant."

Vic showered and dressed in Charlie Ditmar's house. Neal McCord said, "Vic, boy,

you were great. My bum asked for it, so I guess he deserved it."

"Thanks, Neal."

"Except it's the kind of thing," said McCord in his soft, persuasive voice, "I wouldn't want to get around yet—you know what I mean? Lefty taking a licking from a retired old man like you? Damned thing might ruin the gate with Hernandez."

"Sure, Neal," Vic said, "I get what you mean." He grasped the sides of the chair he was sitting in, maintained a dead-pan face. "Hell, it's easy to understand, Neal, after all the ballyhoo you and Ditmar put on about what a killer Lefty's supposed to be."

"You see it the way I knew you would, Vickie," McCord said warmly. "I mean there was nobody here but ourselves. Ourselves and your crowd. You could keep them quiet about it for three weeks, couldn't you, chum? Just till after the fight?"

"They wouldn't say a word," Vic said slowly, "if I told them not to." Inwardly, his heart turned over. "I wouldn't like to see you lose ten, fifteen thousand dollars on the gate. So I'll keep my boys quiet for just five thousand—the five grand you owe me. You see, it would straighten out a little debt I have and leave me in the clear. Naturally I don't need it any more than I need my right arm. You understand, Neal?"

"Why, you Polack b—"

"Easy, chum," Vic said. "Just think it over. I can phone the Associated Press in New York for twenty cents. I could even reverse the charges—no?" Neal McCord's startled expression took a long time to taper off. "You're still a smart crook," Vic said, "but you can't get *all* the breaks."

McCord sat still for a while, thinking it over, tapping his head with his knuckles. "I should never have done business with a pug that had a brain," he finally admitted. "Well, Vic, you'll have my check in the morning."

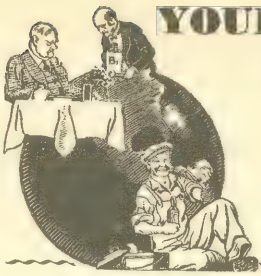
"Certified, if you don't mind, Neal, and the boys won't talk until after the fight."

They walked out to the road to where a station wagon and a light truck were parked. On both station wagon and truck was inscribed THE CHAMPION CONSTRUCTION COMPANY. Vic ran his fingers along the lettering and confessed, "The damned thing used to embarrass me, but I guess it's all right now." He climbed into the coupe with Mary and Joey and led the parade back to camp.

Paul the Greek stood by the pavilion. "A great guy, ain't he, Neal?"

"Even if he cost me honest money I stole," Neal said, "there's not many real champions left."

THE END



YOUR WORLD *and mine!*

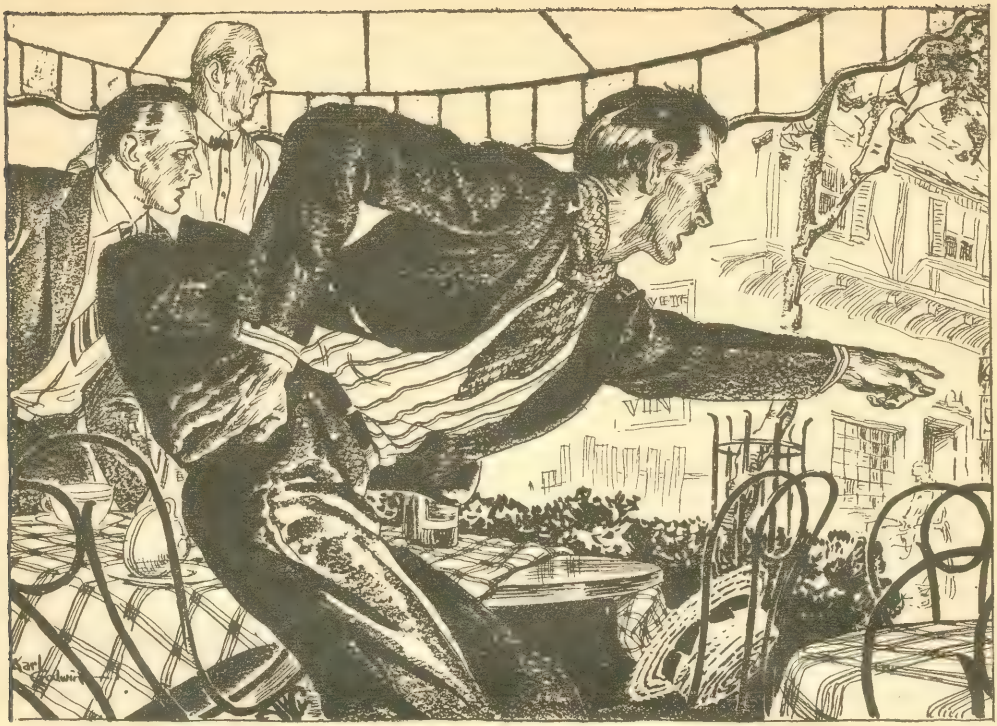
by Lawrence N. Galton

Recently in Salt Lake City a section of sidewalk mysteriously exploded. Puzzled city authorities finally called in a botany professor from the University of Utah, who discovered that the cause of the explosion was a common mushroom. Heavy rains had so increased the cell sap of the plant that it exerted 2,250 pounds of pressure per square inch beneath the sidewalk—enough to blow it apart as effectively as a bomb hit.

Trying to investigate the unexplainable, the British Society of Psychiatrical Research has made a study of specters of dying persons appearing to friends distant from the death beds. Out of 15,000 cases, it accepted 352 as backed by good evidence. In eighty of these, the death occurred within twelve hours after the appearance of the apparition.

The world's most detailed map has recently been completed for the government's Fish and Wildlife Service. It shows every mole hole, ant hill and bird's nest on a 117-acre tract. The entire area is now being sprayed with the Army's DDT and in a short while another census will show the results. One big questions to be answered is whether use of the powerful DDT to exterminate insects may not upset nature's balance and kill off animals as well by depriving them of their food.

In brief: Carrying fresh troops overseas and wounded ones back during the war, the *Queen Elizabeth* once out-ran no less than fifty U-boats in a single trip, and on one trip set a new trans-Atlantic record. . . . Popular misconception is that the duties of the Presidency materially shorten life, but actually the average age of all Presidents at death has been over sixty-eight. . . . Since 1930, forty-seven million Chinese have learned to read. . . . About one out of every two thousand letters mailed ends up in the Dead Letter Office, where as much as $195,000 a year in cash is found enclosed in them.



The man on the sidewalk paled, at my friend's shout, then he turned to run.

DEATH NEVER KNOCKS

by

John Hetherington

THE alert eyes of the small man who sat at the neighboring table followed the party of young Resistance men as they clumped past the café and marched on along the street in the soft Paris sunshine, their wood-soled shoes clattering noisily on the sidewalk. They were armed with a variety of weapons—German Mausers, American tommy-guns, Italian carbines, British service rifles—and they looked ripe for trouble.

The small man watched them until they had passed from sight around the corner into the Rue de Rivoli. Then he sat back in his chair and removed his straw hat.

"Ah, *m'sieur,* these youths!" he sighed. "How they love noise, noise, noise!"

His mouth twisted into a quizzical grin and he raised his forefinger, commanding silence, and cocked his head on one side in the attitude of an inquisitive bird. I listened and, in the quiet of the Paris morning, heard a burst of rifle shots in the distance.

"You observe?" He shrugged. "Everywhere young men of the Resistance firing off their

A poignant, moving story of occupied

Illustrated by Karl Godwin

rifles, firing at anything—or nothing. Ah, well, I also was young once, I also thought there could be no battle without noise. Such ideas are the privilege of youth."

He stood up, walked across to where I sat. Remarking, "You permit, *m'sieur?"* he seated himself in the chair on the other side of the marble-topped table. He had an air of rather shabby savoir faire. His suit was threadbare at the elbows and cuffs, but it had been pressed with infinite care. His pointed shoes were cracking, but they shone like tan gems.

"You will join me in a *café,* eh, *m'sieur?"* The waiter fetched coffee, and we sipped it. The small man set down his cup with a grunt of disgust. *"Café national!"* he exclaimed. "Undoubtedly an invention of the *collaborateurs* designed to poison the French nation. Fit only for pigs, Vichyists and the Boches."

Another burst of rifle shots cut short his strictures on the subject of the quality of the coffee in Occupied France. He smiled and waved his hand—a remarkable hand, I noticed, long and graceful with a musician's tapered fingers—his single remarkable feature—in the direction of the shooting.

"Let them have their fun," he said. "After all, it is not every day, or every year, that Paris is liberated. And who knows? Perhaps one of their stray bullets will accidentally kill a *collaborateur.* . . . . But it was not all shooting and noise in the Resistance, *m'sieur,* in the years before the Allies came."

He took another mouthful of coffee, grimaced and sat looking out into the sunny street. "You have heard of Ulrich the Butcher?"

"General Ulrich Klaube, of the SS," I said. "Who hasn't?"

"Exactly! But not lately, eh, *m'sieur?"*

"No," I agreed. "He disappeared rather suddenly."

"Very suddenly," the small man said drily. "Do you know how?"

"Well, no," I told him.

"I can tell you," he said. "The Boches liquidated Ulrich the Butcher for the murder of Field Marshal Baumann, also of the SS. A curious affair, *m'sieur!* It illustrates my point that the Resistance was not all noise and shooting. Perhaps you would care to hear the story?"

"If you have the time to tell it."

"I am expecting to meet a man here." He glanced at his watch. "He will be half an hour yet. There is time and to spare."

ULRICH the Butcher (the small man said) was a good German. That is to say, he was a pig, a Boche, a ruthless murderer of the helpless and the weak. He assisted in subduing Poland and Holland. Then, in the autumn of 1943 his masters of the SS sent him to France.

"Klaube, there is trouble in France," they told him. "A spirit of unrest is abroad there. It is your job, Klaube, to persuade these French that only by embracing the New Order can they find peace and happiness."

And Ulrich the Butcher smiled and pinned his medals to his chest and came to France.

Ulrich was still smiling after six or seven months, but his smile was growing a little ragged at the edges. He had used the tried and proved methods of the SS, with certain refinements of his own invention, in a score of centers where national resistance was causing problems for the Boches, but the worst he

France that will live long after the black terror of the Boche has been forgotten

could do seemed only to fan the flames instead of quenching them. He shot twenty Resistance men, and a hundred rose to fill their places. He tortured suspects with whips and fire and thumbscrews, and they spat in his face with their last breath, then died.

Ulrich was not defeated, for the Boche can never understand that there is something in men who have known freedom that is stronger than physical pain and stronger than death. But he was worried. So were his superiors in Berlin. Indeed, so worried were they, as the winter died—a bitter winter, *m'sieur,* even without the Boches, and a hundred times bitterer with them—and spring crept on towards summer, that they summoned SS Field Marshal Baumann, himself an adept in murder, torture and similar arts esteemed by the Hun, and told him to make a trip to France and see if Ulrich the Butcher was growing tender-hearted and womanish.

Now, *m'sieur,* in the farmlands of Normandy there is a village named La Bénédiction, a solid village, and in peaceful days a prosperous one. There, about this time, the Resistance was unusually lively. The very night before Field Marshal Baumann was scheduled to reach Paris, two SS officers were murdered in the streets of La Bénédiction, their throats cut from ear to ear.

The news was telephoned post-haste to Ulrich in Paris. He was stunned for a moment, then he behaved like a bull gone mad.

"I shall make these accursed people pay for this outrage," he screamed. "La Bénédiction and all its people shall die. The village and every farm for ten miles around shall be laid waste. I shall show the field marshal a sight worth remembering."

You raise your brows, *m'sieur,* wondering how I know these things? The Resistance, my friend, knew much that it was not supposed to know. Otherwise, how could there have been a Resistance?

Ulrich the Butcher sat down at his desk and wrote a note to be handed to Field Marshal Baumann on his arrival. He begged that the field marshal would excuse his failure to greet him at the airport and explained the circumstances that called him away. Further, he begged that the field marshal would follow him to La Bénédiction with all expedition, in order to witness "the vengeance that the Reich exacts from those who oppose its inflexible will." Then Ulrich stepped into a fast car and set out for La Bénédiction.

One thing must be said for this Ulrich. He was a man of action. He reached La Bénédiction an hour after dawn, and within two hours he had summoned a full parade of SS officers, cursed them for blundering fools, ordered the local commandant back to Berlin in disgrace, caused notices to be printed and circulated offering a reward of ten thousand francs and immunity from punishment to an informer against the murderers of the two SS officers, and begun to formulate detailed plans for the vengeance of the SS.

Alas, *m'sieur,* even in a basket of seemingly good apples you may find one apple rotten at the core. So it is among men. The men of the Resistance everywhere were chosen with microscopic care, but here and

Hidden under the apron was a parcel. She quietly slipped it to Aristide.

there among them was an unworthy man, one whose love of money exceeded love of France and his hatred of the Boches. There was such a one in the Resistance cell that had murdered the two SS swine. And ten thousand francs is a lot of money, *m'sieur,* a lot of money! By noon that day, five men of the Resistance were in Ulrich's hands.

The Resistance group in each Department of France was, you understand, divided into cells. For safety, no member of one cell knew the identity of a member of another cell. Orders were received by each cell from a departmental commandant, whose identity was known only to the cell leader. Simple,

and a necessary precaution against treachery!

Now the cell that had murdered the two SS officers numbered six men. And five of these were in Ulrich's hands. The inference was obvious, the more so when it was learned that the sixth member, a great ox of a fellow, with squinting eyes, one Fat Jules, who kept a *bistro* on the main square, had decamped that very morning without even kissing his wife farewell.

Ulrich rubbed his hands. All was going well for him. He even jested with the pretty chambermaid at the village hotel, which he had requisitioned as his headquarters, bundling the other lodgers and their belongings into the street and bidding the SS guards drive them away with rifle butts. Ulrich, in his softer moments, liked a pretty face—even a Boche has some of the more fleshly human instincts, *m'sieur!*—and Jeanne, the chambermaid, seemed taken by his masculinity. So he permitted her to remain and wait upon him.

He might have been less genial had he known that Jeanne's brother was one of the Resistance men arrested that morning, a certain François, who now lay in Ulrich's prison awaiting torture and, inevitably, death. Genial! That is scarcely the word, *m'sieur!* Ulrich pinched her cheek, squeezed her arm and promised himself that, before he took final vengeance on the village and its people, he would pluck this fair flower and add it to the growing bouquet he was accumulating.

That was one of the loveliest days of all the spring, but it was a gray day for La Bénédiction, *m'sieur!* The men, women and children of the place did not know the fate that Ulrich had decreed for them, but they knew that his presence boded them no good. No arrests had been made, save of the five Resistance men who had killed the two SS pigs, but nobody was allowed to leave the village or the surounding district. And fear was abroad like a tangible presence.

The men of La Bénédiction sat about in the cider shops drinking and muttering among themselves. The women did their marketing and household duties with heavy hearts. The children, even, ceased their play. The only human beings—if I may misuse a term—who carried on as usual were the squads of SS men who tramped here and there preparing for Field Marshal Baumann's coming.

You ask yourself, *m'sieur,* why the Resistance did nothing in this crisis? It was difficult, impossible for them to act, or even to gather in groups of more than two or three to discuss the situation. For the SS men watched them like birds of prey. These Resistance fighters were men of courage, men as unbreakable as the rocks of the sea, men of action, but now they were baffled. For it was not action of the usual kind that was required—not such action as that indulged in by our young friends who are so busy today burning up precious gunpowder and expending costly bullets, shouting *"Vive la France! Vive de Gaulle!"* —but the action of stealth, guile, subtlety.

I MENTIONED the girl Jeanne, Ulrich's chambermaid, and her brother François, Ulrich's prisoner. I have not mentioned a certain Aristide, a man no bigger than myself, *m'sieur,* frail and considered unequal to the trials a Resistance fighter must expect to encounter, and therefore not a member of the Resistance, though he hated the Boches with an implacable hatred and his arm ached to strike a blow for France.

Yet how should this Aristide expect to be taken seriously? He had lived an eccentric, unhealthy life, running away at a tender age from his father's farm near La Bénédiction to join a traveling circus and graduating at last to the music-hall stages of the Continent as . . . Guess, *m'sieur!* I challenge you to guess! You will never find the answer! As a knife-thrower, *m'sieur,* cavorting on the stage with his ridiculous weakling's body and pipestem legs crammed into a costume blazing with spangles, and performing miracles (the best audiences acknowledged his genius in his absurd art) of knife-throwing. They billed him as Aristide the Peerless.

Of course, he could expect nobody to take him seriously. Certainly not François, whom Aristide admired above all men for his courage and strength. Nor even Jeanne, whom he loved for her beauty and for the calm of her eyes, which were like the eyes of the Madonna. He had returned to La Bénédiction when France fell, abandoning his lucrative profession, hoping to find an opportunity among the scenes of his childhood to strike a blow, however puny, for France. But people only laughed. Or, worse, ignored him.

And then on this day, the afternoon of the day on which Ulrich the Butcher was preparing to destroy La Bénédiction, Aristide, alone in the room he rented in the cottage of Pierre, the undertaker, had a caller. It was the girl Jeanne, fresh from the polishing of Ulrich's boots and folderols.

Jeanne stayed only a few minutes talking with Aristide. At the end of the discussion, she slipped a narrow parcel about eighteen inches long from under her apron and pressed it into Aristide's hand.

An hour later Aristide emerged from the house and strolled down the street, the foreboding street with the cottages huddling about it like frightened sheep in a thunderstorm.

He turned in to the church, a fine old Norman structure fronted by a round tower of weathered gray stone.

Two SS men were passing and they glanced curiously at the small figure of the ex-knife-thrower entering the church.

"He's going to pray for the repose of his soul," said one of the Germans, chuckling.

"He must be clairvoyant," replied the other, and they both laughed as they walked on.

Aristide found the church deserted. He turned aside, heaved open the massive door barring the entrance to the stone tower, slipped inside and drew the door shut. He climbed the spiral staircase until he was three-quarters of the way to the top of the tower. There, he paused at a circular unglazed opening, one of the primitive windows which pierced the wall. Through the opening, he looked out over La Bénédiction and, about thirty paces distant and a few feet below the level where he stood, into another window, flung wide open to let the spring air into a room on the first floor of the hotel, the room Ulrich had requisitioned.

Aristide settled down to wait and watch. The minutes became an hour. Afternoon sounds, the shuffle of men marching, the rasp of orders issued in German, were borne in to him. The hour became two hours, the two hours three. Aristide waited and watched, inexhaustibly patient. Then, far off, he heard the sustained roar of a German staff car's hooter. It drew rapidly nearer, came blasting into the village, then was abruptly hushed.

The minutes passed. And still Aristide waited. Seven, eight, nine minutes went by before the door of the hotel room which Aristide was looking into opened, and a thick ugly man wearing the uniform and insignia of a German field marshal entered. Aristide recognized him as Field Marshal Baumann. He was followed by a lean, bony, high-featured man whose uniform fitted his body without a wrinkle. Ulrich the Butcher.

They closed the door, and Baumann flung his gloves and cap on to the table and turned to Ulrich. Aristide could not hear their voices, but he could see Baumann's face reddening, could see Ulrich gesturing in protest.

Aristide gently massaged the muscles of his right shoulder. Then, from inside his coat, he drew a heavy dagger about eighteen inches long, with a bright blade ending in a keen point. He laid the dagger gently in his right hand, haft foremost. He poised himself on the balls of his feet and raised his hand. The hand snapped forward and a streak of white light flashed through the round window of the tower. It crossed the intervening space, flicked through the window of the hotel and pierced Field Marshal Baumann's throat an inch to the left of the windpipe.

Baumann was in the middle of a gesture, his hands spread wide. He stood for an instant like a man petrified. Then, his throat spurting blood, his hands dropped and his body crashed face down to the floor.

AND that," said the small man, "was the salvation of La Bénédiction—for it was the end of Ulrich the Butcher and his plans of vengeance. Five days later the Allies landed and drove the Boches away."

"But why the end of Ulrich?" I asked.

He surveyed me with the expression of a patient man irritated by the questions of a dull child. "A room twenty feet above the ground, a guard on the door, a field marshal and a general quarreling inside? The field marshal is suddenly dead with the general's dagger in his throat? It is what I think you call an open-and-shut case!"

"Ulrich's dagger?"

"But of course." The small man paused as the waiter came up and bent to whisper to him, listened intently, then smiled and murmured, "Magnificent! Magnificent!" He turned back to me. "You see, Jeanne had purloined the dagger from Ulrich's kit and given it to Aristide. It was all her plan. Entirely! A wonderful young woman, that one! She would have made a great general."

He stood up, smoothing the knees of his trousers. "You will forgive me, *m'sieur?* The man I was expecting is at hand."

I was telling myself that the story he had just related was fantastic, a fable, a wild romance born in an intoxicated brain.

"Absorbing!" I remarked, ironically. "But come now, my friend, do you expect me to believe that any knife-thrower is so expert that he could pierce a man's jugular with a dagger-point at thirty paces?"

The small man was not listening. His eyes were watching the gross heavy figure of a man shambling along the sidewalk toward the café. He took a couple of steps forward and called in a loud, clear voice: "Hey, Jules!"

The heavy man halted. His squinting eyes darted to the small man's face, and his fat mouth sagged open. He paled to the hue of parchment, standing there on the sidewalk. He backed a few steps, his lips working. Then he turned, in a panic, to run.

Forty paces must have separated them when the small man moved. He moved so quickly that my eye could not follow his actions. His hand rose, and I saw a glint of sunlight on bright steel. There was a whir, and a shaft of silver sped toward the heavy man. His scream died stillborn, and he sagged forward onto

the sidewalk, a knife buried hilt-deep in his throat an inch to the left of the windpipe.

The small man turned, dusting his fingertips. "You were saying, *m'sieur?*"

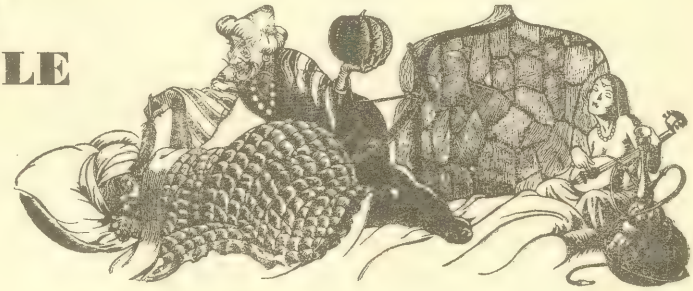
"Nothing."

He turned to the waiter. "Henri, some of these young men will presently grow tired of firing off their rifles and creating a noise. Pray ask them to remove that carrion from the sidewalk. I would do it myself, but I have a rendezvous."

He faced back to me and bowed. "*Adieu, m'sieur!* And a thousand thanks for your patience in listening to my tale. It would delight me to stay and hear something of your adventures, but my rendezvous is most important. It is with a lady named Jeanne."

He clapped his straw hat onto his head, bowed again and strutted away in the sunshine. I swear that his shoulders cringed with distaste as a fresh burst of rifle shots reverberated over the rooftops of Paris.

FOOD AND FINE FETTLE



by Lansing Coe

Global gusto: Chileans have a festival during which they cut a lamb's throat, then pump vinegar, wine and spices through the veins. Going all through the internal organs, the mixture marinates them and in a short time, liver, heart and brain are removed and eaten —raw. . . . Because they believe melons reach prime ripeness for just one five-minute period, rich Persians employ melon-diviners who watch the fruit day and night, then at the right moment, even in the middle of the night, take it to the master. . . . An old standby in Budapest cafés is a Hungarian whistling glass; finish your drink and you blow into the glass to produce a deep whistle which summons the waiter for instant refilling. . . . When first introduced into Costa Rica, sea turtle became instantly unpopular because of a rumor—totally unfounded—that it caused leprosy. Smart publicity men started a counter-rumor: that it sharpened virility, and today it's a Costa Rican national favorite.

American cooking has been enriched by dishes from all over the world, but in return we have given the world the beefsteak—no mean accomplishment. On menus in almost every civilized corner of the earth, you can find the same delicious article of food, but how the spelling changes. The Italians say *bistecca,* the French prefer *biftek.* The Spanish write it *biftec,* and the Portuguese cut it short to *bife.* The Swiss add a letter and spell it *beefsteack,* while the Swedes call it merely *biff.*

Rattleburgers—made from the meat of rattlesnakes—are already as common as hot dogs and hamburgers in the Southwest, particularly in Oklahoma, Florida and Texas. The taste? Like frogs' legs and tuna fish combined. A plant is going up in Florida to turn out canned rattlesnake meat.

Eddie Cantor's food favorite is meat balls. Make them like this: Combine a pound of lean raw beef finely chopped with half a cup of stale bread crumbs, one slightly beaten egg, two-thirds teaspoon salt, one-eighth teaspoon pepper and a few grains of nutmeg. Make into balls an inch and a half in diameter, cover and let stand one hour. Brown the meat balls. Melt two tablespoons of butter or margarine, add two tablespoons of flour, and stir until blended. Pour on three-quarters cup of brown stock (bouillon cubes) gradually while stirring constantly. Bring to boiling point and season. Add meat balls to sauce, cover and let simmer an hour and a half. You'll have Cantor cuisine to delight four to six suddenly banjo-eyed customers.

Wisdom . . . Talleyrand said, "Two things are essential to life: to give good dinners and to keep on fair terms with women."

Gabriel wrestled the makeshift sea anchor overboard. Jasmine watched with fear in her eyes.

Salt-Water Sailor

by D Cottrell

Illustrated by Gail Phillips

ONLY on small islands in large seas have parents this particular fear: that the children may "blow away." In the Alligators, the children sail their sky-blue catboats almost from the time they can walk. The Alligators are very small, rising only a few feet above the glittering tides of the Northeastern Caribbean. Let the children get a little too far to seaward, spearing crawfish or hooking sponges, and then let one of the savage Caribbean squalls drive over the jungle and the sun—and the children may not be able to find the islands again. If the turtle fleet is away off the Banks of Nicaragua, so that there are not many ships to join in the search, no one may ever see the children again. The lovely and glittering sea has swallowed them. They are somewhere under running cloud-shadow and great sun and rumbling thunder, but no one knows where.

After two weeks, the people put on their best black clothes, walk seriously to the cemetery under the sea-grapes, and set up little headboards of three-inch-thick mahogany on which is cut the child's name, a date of birth, and, on the next line, "Blew Away" and another date. Then the people walk home again, surrounded by the glittering and lovely menace of the sea. . . .

All this Gabriel's grandmother meant as she stuck a silver head above the half-door and commanded: ". . . And a half-pound of sugar—and don't blow away!"

"No, m'm," Gabriel said. At twelve, he was too good a seaman to blow away.

Had they been able to trade at the store in West Town, it would have been easy. But his grandmother and Old Man Farridon—who claimed to be a hundred years old, and owned the store and most other things in West Town—had not spoken to each other for fifty years. No one knew what they had quarreled about, but Gabriel had to sail eight miles to Main Town when his grandmother wanted a can of milk or a needleful of thread. His

At first there seemed no real risk in

catboat had worn a sort of path across the Caribbean.

He went now along the white coral street where the sea-grapes threw round gray shadows, and black and crimson crotons and pink cabbage roses stuck through the picket fences that were so old the whitewash was a full inch thick; then under denser sea-grapes toward the blue-green flame of the sea. As with all the islanders, there was Spanish blood in his West Indian ancestry, but it showed only in the deeper brown of his skin and an exuberance of life itself, like the life in the flashing sugarcane and the great sun. His hair and his eyelashes were gold; his eyes, laughing and blue. His speech was the old English of the islands, with its *w* for *v*—so that a good woman was "wery wirtuous."

The islanders said that you had to get up soon in the early to see a prettier boy than Grandma Corry's. Certainly Jasmine Smith, Old Man Farridon's great-great-granddaughter, thought so. She darted out now from behind a black croton bush veined in orange. Her eight-year-old grin revealed a missing tooth, her face was smothered in tan freckles and her hair was pale gold and straight. Only an artist would have seen that her face and her dark amber eyes were beautiful. She was the apple of Old Man Farridon's eye. He said she deserved to have been born a century sooner.

Gabriel frowned.

"'Lo, Gabriel!" Jasmine said adoringly.

Gabriel did not reply. Jasmine drew her hand from beneath her apron; it held a small pot of cocoa-plum jam. Gabriel took the jar and opened it. He ate coldly of its contents—a soft crimson jelly, tart yet sweet, filled with soft seeds that are like chocolate and almonds all dashed with sugar from the fields of Heaven. As they came to the gray jetty that hung over the green fire of the lagoon, his eyes narrowed suddenly, he shoved the remaining jam at Jasmine and rushed out along the jetty angrily yelling, *"Hey!"*

Several older boys—some of Old Man Farridon's eighty-two great-grandchildren—were sailing his catboat about the lagoon. A man's boat is sacred! *"Hey!"* Gabriel yelled.

The bigger boys laughed rudely. They skimmed close to the jetty, slapping their feet offensively on the water. They would not have dared to do it if Gabriel had had a father.

At last, the boys bumped into the dock, careless of scratching the beautiful blue of

running out those few extra miles to the old wreck. Then storm clouds gathered

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At last, the boys bumped into the dock, careless of scratching the beautiful blue of

the catboat's sides. Gabriel landed among them like a small panther. "You let my skiff 'lone!" The melee was short and bloody. Gabriel was wondering how he had done as well as he had, when he saw Jasmine kneeling in the boat with a turtle-hook in her hands. She had a bloody little nose.

"We may cast off now," she said hopefully.

The bigger boys were climbing up the jetty. He couldn't put her out to face the boys alone. He cast off, and Jasmine grinned shyly and happily from the bow as she wiped the blood from her nose with her apron.

THEY sailed up to Main Town and bought the stores. They climbed back down the steps that the pirates had cut when Elizabeth was Queen in England. Fish the colors of butterflies played under the boat. Frigate birds were black pencil marks in the sky.

Longing was in Jasmine's eyes. "Let us sail 'round to see the gunboats!" she said.

To see the gunboats lying in forty feet of water off the southern tip of the island was the ambition of all children in the Alligators. Jasmine had never seen them. Her nose had swollen up like a small bun, but her eyes were bright. "It's wery soon in the early!" she said longingly.

Gabriel experienced the helpless obligation one feels toward a puppy that persists in following him. . . .

They sailed past gray coral points where acres of wild lilies grew down to the tide and the scent made the bees drunk. Past sea-grape jungles and the leper house. Past the last habitation. On along the uninhabited southwestern shore. It was very lovely and very lonely here.

They moored for lunch on a coral spit where thatch-palms were silver to the Trades. Jasmine cooked fresh-caught crawfish in a can of sea water, and brought pepper and salt, four slices of bread, a jar of homemade butter and two Mexican limes out of her apron pocket, thus proving that she had intended all the while to come with him and make him take her to the wrecks. She peeled the crawfish and squeezed lime juice over the delicious flesh and sprinkled it with the pepper and salt. She served it on strips of wild banana leaf. After lunch they saw the old gunboats lying in the crystal water.

They were fifteen miles from home when they started back through the blue and purple afternoon. Then Jasmine wanted a white orchid she saw on a wild fig tree. Getting the orchid, she found a wild canary's nest in a papaya, and thought the parent birds might not mind if she took one fledgling as a pet. She held the chick carefully between her palms. . . . She was a great deal of nuisance.

They were racing for home along the uninhabited shore, when the storms began to poke up, silver and purple, over the island. Gabriel had a respect for storms, but his catboat was the best on the island. Thus, confronted by the choice of following the shore of Long Bay or cutting across it, he headed across to save miles. The storm stood up, filling half the sky. The dark water whitened under the first gusts of the storm, and the catboat flew. From across the jungle, a steady roar advanced, and the trees bent and silvered under the rain. Then the island was gone behind the racing wall of rain. The catboat leaped to the impact of the gusts. Rain was smoking from sail and mast and seats, churning the sea to a frothy, singing roar. The children laughed at each other, loving the rain and wind.

Then it happened. There was a muffled crackling sound, a slight bumping, and the boat veered sideward—and, with a louder crack, the mast came down. Jasmine cried out sharply.

Gabriel fought to keep the boat from going over. Out of the tail of his eye, he saw two-thirds of the center-board bob up behind them and swirl away in the rain. He got the boat before the wind and they hauled the sheet and mast aboard, Jasmine using one hand, a little clumsily.

Gabriel locked the tiller with his leg over it, and lashed broken mast and boom in a cross, with the sheet tied to it at the outer points of the cross. He tied the anchor rope to the center of the cross and wrestled the thing overboard for a sea-anchor.

They shipped water as they came about. Then they were riding more steadily. They bailed out the water; Jasmine used only her right hand, and her face was very pale.

Bailing, Gabriel knew what must have happened. The boys that morning had struck a rock, damaging the center-board and cracking the mast. The tough wood had held until the strain of running into the wind had severed it. Now they were in a bad fix.

Next second, they were in a worse one. The thatch palm rope, meant only for casual mooring, parted from the sea-anchor. Again they almost went over, driving suddenly sideward. Gabriel got them before the wind, having to take the chance of being swamped from astern by an overtaking wave.

Before the storm swept over them and on, there was pink in the domed clouds, rosy fire on the trailing watering pots of rain. The island was out of sight; they still drove seaward. Jasmine looked pale in the dying light.

He said, "Don't be scared. We'll find the island!"

She smiled. "I'm not scared—wif you!" She added, looking down as if a little ashamed, "The boom broke my arm."

His heart turned over with pity for her. Apart from that one small cry, which he had thought was fear, she had made no complaint, bailing faithfully with her good arm. He cried out as if angry, "Why didn' you *say?*"

"I thought you'd be mad."

"You'd make anyone mad!" he cried in helpless distress for her.

She offered, as if it helped, "I still got my canary bird."

Gabriel estimated their chances. They weren't good. They had no center-board and no sail. The wind was rolling dark and warm from the east. The Alligator catboats carried only one long sculling or steering oar; without a second oar, they had no hope of paddling against the sea. From the freedom of the dark swells, he knew that they were already a long way from the island.

Search would be made, but only one turtle ship was in port and the searchers would take as a starting point a spot from twelve to fifteen miles north of where they had actually been. No one knew they had gone to the wrecks. An error of twelve miles at the start would throw out the turtle crew's assumption of where they would drift, as they would be in a different current. There was very little chance the turtle ship would ever see them.

As an alternative, they could run down the wind—with a patchwork sail of clothes on an oar for mast—for the coast of Central America, four hundred miles away. . . . A week? Two weeks? Three? He might make it, but Jasmine would die of pain and fever. . . .

Jasmine cried, "Look!"

Ahead, against the sunset the seas were breaking against a wallowing shape. Standing, Gabriel made out the almost-submerged hulk of a ship. Frantic sculling brought him up to it. He found an exposed rib about which to make fast. It was no solution of the problem, but it altered it. The hulk was too big to be affected by winds short of hurricane strength. It was an anchor, of sorts.

"Listen, Jasmine!" he said. "You will stay in the boat unless it gets too terrible rough. You are only to cut the boat free if the hulk starts to sink! Here is a knife. . . . In the morning, you are to put your apron on a stick and put it on the highest part of the hulk. If you see a boat, wave at them. Bail the boat out, so you can catch good water if it rains. Try to find barnacles on the hulk and bait this fishing line and try to catch fish. Keep wet cloths on your arm and your head. Don't be frightened, for I will be back. I am going to swim for help."

She was galvanized out of her pain. "No, Gabriel! *No!* . . . You can't swim to the island! You can't find it! Sharks—"

"If you are silly, I'll slap you! It's our best chance. If we both stay here, there is only the chance of someone finding us. If I go, there is the chance of my getting to shore, too."

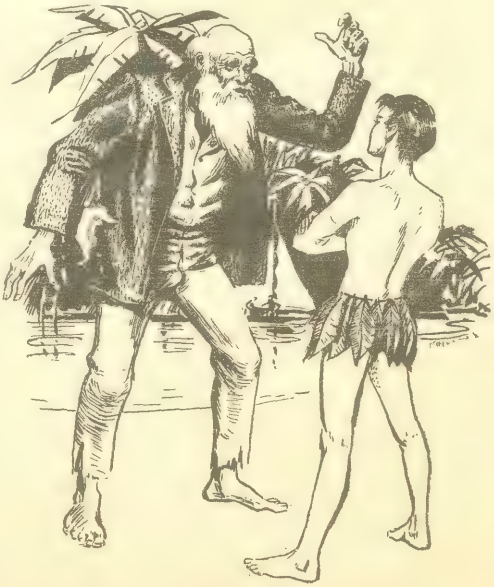
"You mean it's *my* best chance!" Jasmine sobbed. "It's hardly any chance for you! Please, Gabriel, don't go! I don't mind being lost with you, Gabriel! Please, please—"

"If you are stupid, I will never take you out again! Let me bandage your arm. Then I am going."

"Please kiss me, Gabriel!" Jasmine whispered as he finished the arm. She had been quiet and good while he fixed the arm. He put his lips against hers, and her lips felt very soft and warm and adoring under his. He gave her an extra kiss on the tip of her swollen nose. "You aren't really a nuisance, Jasmine," he said. "You're wery nice. . . ."

THE boys of the Alligators swim as no one else in the world save a Kanaka swims; they swim as other people walk, as far as they need to go. Free of the hulk, Gabriel swam easily.

With absolute darkness, the size of the sea suddenly increased. It was titanic; endlessly beneath him, around him. He was a tossed



"Where's my girl?" the old man roared. Gabriel stood his ground.

speck, naked and vulnerable. By no effort of will, could he lift his naked body from the swaying menace of the sea.

At regular intervals, he rested, lying on his back and looking up at the stars. He tried to keep from worrying about Jasmine and the unlikely possibility of the hulk sinking. But there is something peculiarly horrid in the sinking of an old hulk. It makes a pulling whirlpool into the night of the sea. If a little girl or a boat were near it . . . He tried to stop thinking of that; for fear saps a man!

In the late night, the cold white fire of phosphorous began to play around his arms and legs. He wished it didn't; for it outlined him for such sharks or barracuda as might be cruising the dark. And it set him to thinking again about Jasmine and what might happen to her if he did not get to shore.

He swam carefully, husbanding his strength. Up-wave, holding position; down-wave, making progress; up-wave again. Keeping his direction by the stars. Long stroke, but not too long; steady kick, but not too hard; pleasant passage of the water beneath his alternately stretched and contracted belly. Easy . . . lovely . . . desperate. . . .

Dawn was a frail blue light above the blue-black line of the sea. A freshening wind poured out of the morning sun. He swam into the face of the great sun and the sea-glitter. As morning wore on, the heat bothered him. The water no longer cooled his burning face as well as it had. He was thirsty, and kept thinking of water—in cisterns, in earthern jars, dripping over big enamel mugs. He had to rest more often now, and the salt water gave him less support.

By noon, he was getting worried by not seeing the island. It might be just beyond the undulating wall of waves that encircled him, and still he could miss it. The frigate birds in the sky above him could see the island, but he could not. He was tired by the tireless motion of the sea. No longer swimming due east, he began to make broad tacks across the face of the sea, every few minutes treading water to try to lift himself from the swaying top of a swell. An elevation of inches might make the difference between life and death for him and for Jasmine.

Toward four o'clock in the afternoon, a storm covered the sun. The deep purple shadow was a sudden blessedness. Thunder shook the world and terrific lightning played about. The wind died. Then, with a great, cool rushing, it came back—and rain before it! The rain trod the sea to foam. He held his mouth open and drank the rain, caught water in his palm and drank. The storm passed, and a soft, wet air breathed out of the south. On the breeze was the scent of wild lilies! . . .

GABRIEL staggered into West Town wearing a palm leaf. The first person he met was Old Man Farridon, roaring like a lion as he got a second schooner ready.

Old Man Farridon grabbed him by the shoulders. "Where's my girl?"

Gabriel could hardly keep his feet. But, looking into Old Man Farridon's eyes, he gave latitude and longitude clearly and carefully. He explained: "The catboat is tied to a hulk."

"How did you get here?"

"I swam," Gabriel said.

Old Man Farridon looked at him with new respect. Then he asked, "How'd you get to sea in the first place?"

"Others used my boat unpermittingly. They sailed fast upon the reef and did not tell me. The shock hurt center-board and mast. They broke soon in the early of the storm."

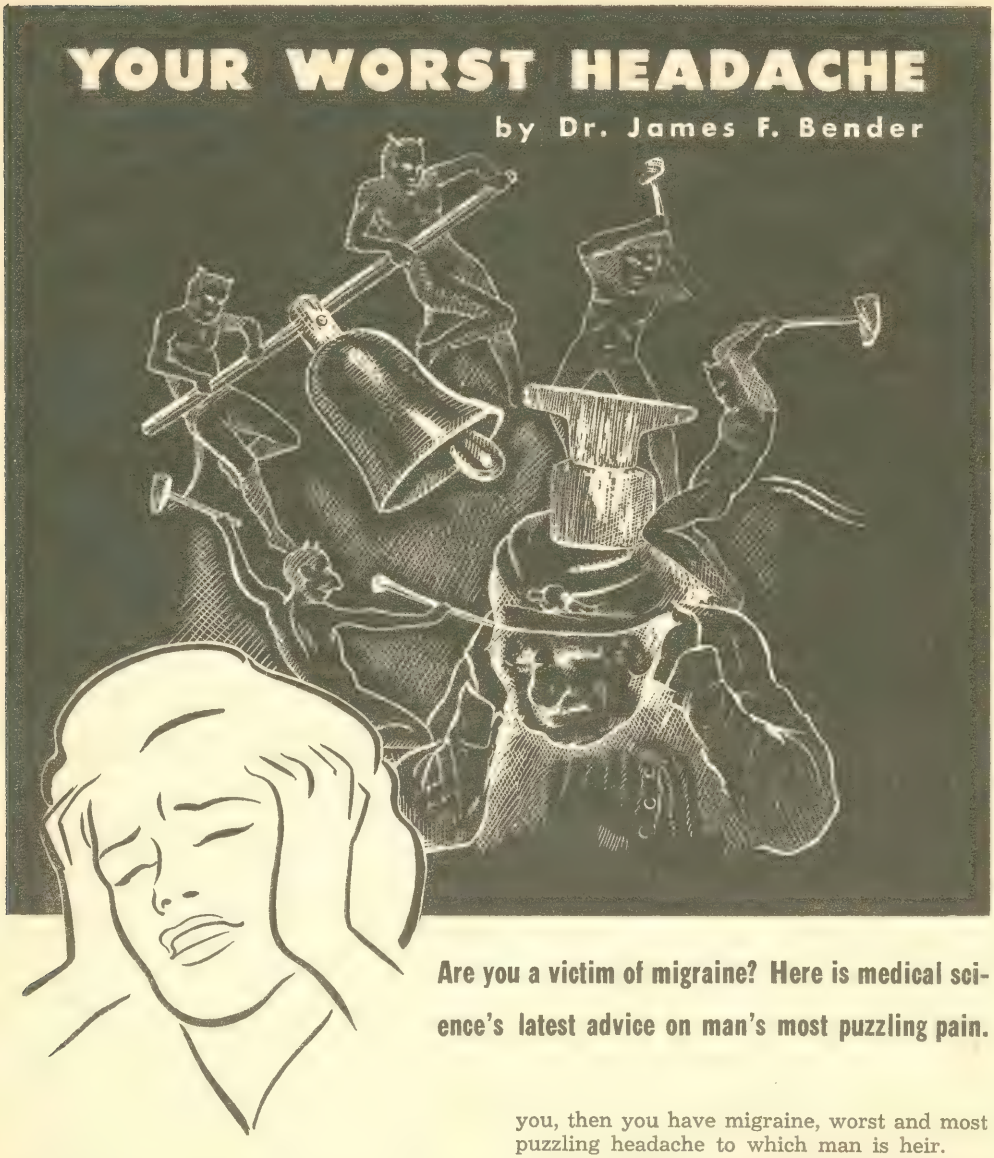
"My great-grandchildren?" Old Farridon asked, and when Gabriel did not answer: "Never mind," he said. "I know my great-grandsons have been in blame. They will not be again." He put his hand again on Gabriel's shoulder. "Not bad, that swim!" he said. "Not bad! We will go and get the girl. Women are born to cause trouble!"

"Jasmine is no trouble," Gabriel said. "She is a wery brave, good girl!"

Old Man Farridon looked at him sharply out of great brown eyes. "And it seems only yesterday your father's father was married!" His beard stirred as if a wind blew through it, and his eyes looked past the sky. "Only yesterday! I was fifty, ten years a widower, and at the height of my power." He looked at Gabriel. "We wooed the same woman, your grandfather and I. There were men of passion on the earth in those days! She chose the wrong man. I grew a little drunk on seven bottles of wine and waited in the starlight to take a last kiss from the bride. . . . She thought I meant to kill your grandfather. In the old years, girls carried lead in their umbrella handles—and she hit me over the head with her umbrella, laying me senseless at her feet. And we never spoke again! . . . But yesterday! It was but yesterday! And now *her* grandson and my great-great-granddaughter . . ." Old Man Farridon's beard stirred and his mighty finger touched Gabriel beneath the chin. "Do not blush like a sun-scorched love-apple, boy! I have lived for a hundred years, and all things pass! But the best in remembering is what a man feels for a woman—if she cause him all the trouble he has known since Eve went weeping through the arch of swords!"

YOUR WORST HEADACHE

by Dr. James F. Bender



Are you a victim of migraine? Here is medical science's latest advice on man's most puzzling pain.

EVER been temporarily blinded by flashing lights before your eyes, assailed by a violent pain in one side of your head? Were you completely wretched, so depressed that you felt everything was hopeless? Were you so sick that, even had you been able to see, you couldn't continue your work or play —in fact, just couldn't stay on your feet but had to lie down and attempt to sleep? And does this kind of headache occur more or less frequently? If the answer is "yes" to these and similar questions your doctor asks you, then you have migraine, worst and most puzzling headache to which man is heir.

By conservative estimate, at least eight million Americans have this affliction—and a good many medical authorities believe that fully fifty percent of the population has suffered isolated attacks.

Just what differentiates migraine from an ordinary sick headache or those that come from mal-focused eyes, sinusitis or neuralgia? Well, you haven't had migraine unless you have, either before or after the onset of the pain, developed an aura, which is what physicians call the visual disturbances that are part and parcel of migraine. And you

Illustrated by L. Sterne Stevens, from a Daumier print

Sometimes migraine sufferers develop a temporary blindness and see only half an object. This is called hemianopsia and occurs only in the most severe cases.

haven't had it unless a throbbing, agonizing pain has been pretty well localized on one side of your head. You probably haven't suffered from it unless, in conjunction with the unpleasant symptoms already listed, you have had one or all of several other symptoms—such as numbness of your hands, tongue and cheeks, temporary aphasia (inability to formulate words), an extreme sensitivity to sound and, during your attacks, violent vomiting.

Though a migrainous person usually feels an exaggerated sense of well-being and competence before an attack or, contrariwise, feels tense, anxious and irritable, migraine can hit out of the blue with no warning at all. The aura, which can be typically described as flashing triangles of light arranged in circular fashion, may suddenly appear and the whole business begin. This aura, by the way, is not disposed of when the sufferer closes his eyes. It goes right on until the climax of the attack is reached and then gradually fades away. In the severest cases—about ten percent—a temporary blindness (hemianopsia) may develop. One half of each thing you look at is seen—half a house, half a photograph. Migraine symptoms vary greatly.

This painful and temporarily incapacitating affliction has been known to medical men since the pyramids were a-building. The old Egyptian doctors trephined the skulls of the pharaoh's migrainous friends. By cutting a wedge-shaped portion out of the cranium they believed they lessened brain pressure, thought to be the cause of the headache. Their reasoning was not so far in error.

Today, though medical men are divided regarding the basic cause of migraine, they now refer to it as a syndrome (a group of concurrent symptoms characterizing a particular type of disorder) rather than a disease in itself. And they are agreed that it afflicts nervous, tense individuals who, by and large, are possessed of more than ordinary intelligence.

Migraine is seldom caused by eyestrain or diseases of the eye, despite the visual disturbances which accompany it. Only in rare cases of opthalmic migraine is there any permanent injury to the eyes themselves.

While migraine affects both sexes, it is harder on men because they can't ordinarily head for the living-room couch or bed. They've got to try to stay on the job. Women seldom experience attacks of it during pregnancy, nor does it usually occur after the menopause. In general, migraine ceases to plague its victims after the age of forty-five.

If you have migraine, the most important thing in the world to you is how you can be cured. Unfortunately, there are just as many beliefs concerning treatment as there are specialists in the medical profession. The physician specializing in internal medicine will, most likely, attempt to cure a sluggish duodenum, the part of the intestine directly below the stomach. According to the theory behind this treatment, the sluggish organ results in an accumulation of body poisons that bring on attacks. Start the organ working properly—and the migraine is conquered.

On the other hand, the allergist, a physician who treats disorders caused by a person's sensitivity to various substances, pollens or foods, will make skin sensitivity tests and carefully watch your diet in an attempt to determine just what brings on the attack. He will then inject you with solutions of the things to which you are sensitive and thus give you immunity against them. The allergist believes that there is a sensitivity reaction in the brain of the migraine sufferer, which causes spasms to occur in the small blood vessels of the head. If you are immunized against the substances which affect you and forego eating foods to which you are also sensitive, migraine will diminish or disappear.

Opposed to the allergist, however, are those doctors who specialize in treating glandular disturbances. These physicians look for disturbances of the sex and pituitary glands in particular when treating migraine. They will give you hormones to make up for any natural secretions you lack—and many times their treatment will bring a relief, if it doesn't do away with your affliction completely.

In addition to these methods of treatment, migraine sufferers have obtained some relief from analgesics (pain killers such as aspirin), the breathing of pure oxygen, the administration of morphine, etc. However, it was not until the last five years that any effective drugs were developed by the medical profession. Today there are two drugs which will often blast an attack with almost the speed of a robomb. And there is one fairly new drug which,

after a period of time, will often knock your whole syndrome for a loop. The two drugs which have proved successful in stopping an attack are ergotamine tartrate and histamine. Both must be taken in individual doses under the direction of a physician. Histamine is always injected. It is dangerous to use, however, if you have high blood pressure.

The drug with which a good deal of success has been achieved in immunizing patients against further attacks is called prostigmin bromide—and it, too, must be taken only under the direction of a physician. It is not a treatment, in that it will not stop an attack. But it probably will eventually enable you to say goodbye to your migraine, at least for a period.

Almost all these varied treatments are directed toward stopping the spasticity (the ease with which a portion of the body is subject to spasm) of the small blood vessels in the patient's brain. For it is these vibrating vessels which, physicians generally agree, are the immediate cause of your migraine. And it is the toxics in your body and the diminished blood supply to the vessels which induce spasm.

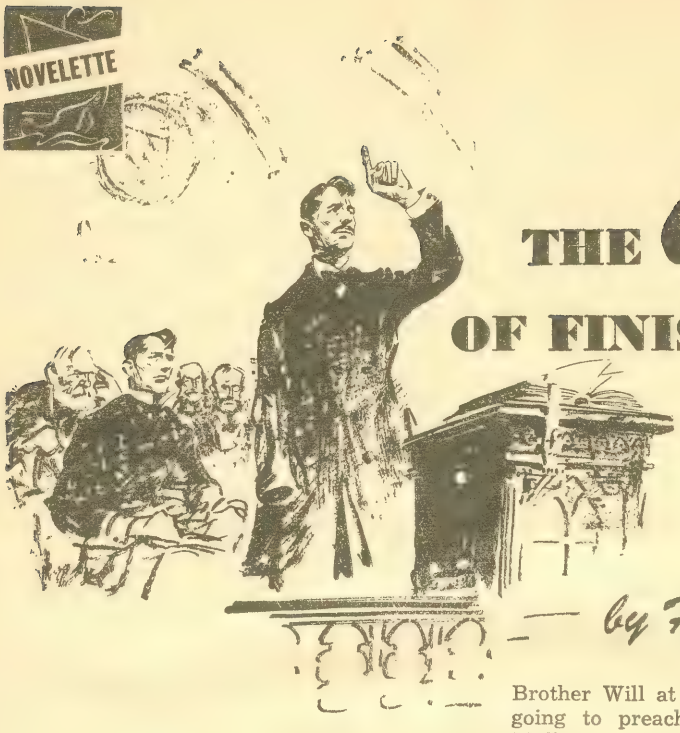
All of the various treatments are carefully regarded by those authorities who believe the affliction to be a psychosomatic disorder, the kind that we are hearing so much of these days in relation to war-shocked veterans and over-fatigued civilians. Hysterical deafness, paralysis of limbs for no apparent reason, blindness without cause, pregnancies which actually do not exist but where all the physical evidence of child-bearing is present are only a few of the physical signs of fears and emotional conflicts. Once these are resolved through brief psychotherapy (interviews with a trained psychiatrist or psychologist), the physical symptoms tend to disappear.

Psychosomatic medicine does not disregard the necessity for having a complete physical checkup before attempting to bring your emotions under control. It may be your hatred of your mother-in-law that brings on attacks, or it may be your wife's habit of putting cold cream on her face before getting into bed—but, if you've been subject to migraine for a number of years, you might have some actual organic disease, brought on either by injury, infection or, most likely, emotional conflict. Therefore, psychosomatic medicine does not rule out the use of drugs. Its attitude is that the sensitivity, the glandular trouble, or what have you, has been developed through emotional conflict but that the trouble exists and can be helped by the various treatments.

In short, the psychosomatic physician believes that the personality of the patient tends to develop certain diseases, that anxieties, feelings of inferiority and emotional attitudes toward the problems of daily living (for instance, getting along with your boss) develop definite tenseness in the body. This tenseness results in spasms of your more susceptible organs and a reduction of the blood supply to them. Thus in one case you may develop ulcers, in another arthritis and in yet another migraine. Your migraine may be immediately due to a sluggish duodenum, an allergic condition, inharmonious glands or toxics in the blood-stream. But basically, the real cause is your own personality.

THE END

NOVELETTE



THE *Arm* OF FINIS MacCAUL

by H. L. Kidd, Jr.

WHEN Cousin Finis came out on the stoop this morning, I knew he was getting ready to leave us. He was clean-shaved and dressed in his regular preaching suit. You know, Cousin Finis is a right fine-looking man, if he is in his sixties and got just that one arm. I figured I had better tell my boy Lee to catch his horse for him.

Cousin Finis looked off down the Little Chestnut. He watched some crows fly off Quinlan's Hill across the old ford, toward Brumley Mountain yonder, and he kind of smiled at me.

"Tod, you know I was born right here, more than sixty years ago. It is a good thing to stop here with you and Marthy when I can. I guess in a few years now my riding days will be done."

The crows turned up the gap, cawing and chasing each other in the sunshine. Cousin Finis looked at them a minute, and then back at me. "I will be stopping over with Brother Will at Bethel Chapel tonight. I am going to preach for Will in the morning. Mollie is ailing, and Will won't leave her, not even for a minute."

Lee came up with the horse then and Cousin Finis put his Testament in one of the saddlebags along with the lunch Marthy had fixed him. Then he climbed up in the saddle, heavy and slow. He sat there a minute, watching the clouds forming up over back of Brumley.

"If she goes it will be hard to bear. Hard for Will and hard for me," he says, kind of to himself. He looked up to where I was on the stoop. "Goodbye, Tod. Take care of that back of yours." And he rode off down the path toward the old ford, his big old horse footing it along slow and easy over all the round rocks.

Well, I knew how it was with him and Cousin Will and Cousin Mollie, all right. I don't care who told you what about the whole business. I was right there beside him when the thing started. I was right there when the mill burned, and I was right down in the front row the day Cousin Finis made his testimony in front of all his home folks.

Dark and turbulent was the wild Irish anger of Finis MacCaul

You see, I was living with Uncle Vance then, right here on this old home place.

Uncle Vance farmed the place here, and ran the mill on the side. By the time I came to live with them, Will and Finis, his sons, was just about running farm and mill too, for Uncle Vance was getting old, and he couldn't get around like he used to.

Well, it was a Monday morning after I had been here maybe a month before I started to catch on to the idea all wasn't going so good between Will and Finis, brothers or no brothers. The three of us was working down in the mill, kind of straightening around. I had noticed the difference in them before, Will big and quiet and steady, and Finis just as big, but wild and reckless, always one to be pranking around and acting up.

I was sorting sacks in the little room, set back off the big mill floor proper. Everything was quiet, and the room was cool and dim. When I heard Finis come in through the big door, I figured he had been out to set the wheel, for they was getting ready to test her out. Sure enough, I heard him say to Will, "I got her set now, Will. Let's see how she does."

"That's good, Finis," says Will, "and will you hand me that piece of rawhide over there. I want to fix this old chair here whilst I'm at it. Somebody is going to fall through it if I don't get it fixed pretty soon."

Well, Finis must have picked up the rawhide, but I guess he never handed it to Will, not considering what happened in a minute. I wasn't aiming to listen, but I couldn't help hearing him ask Will, sort of hesitating, "Say, Will, did you stay over to Lunceford's again last night?"

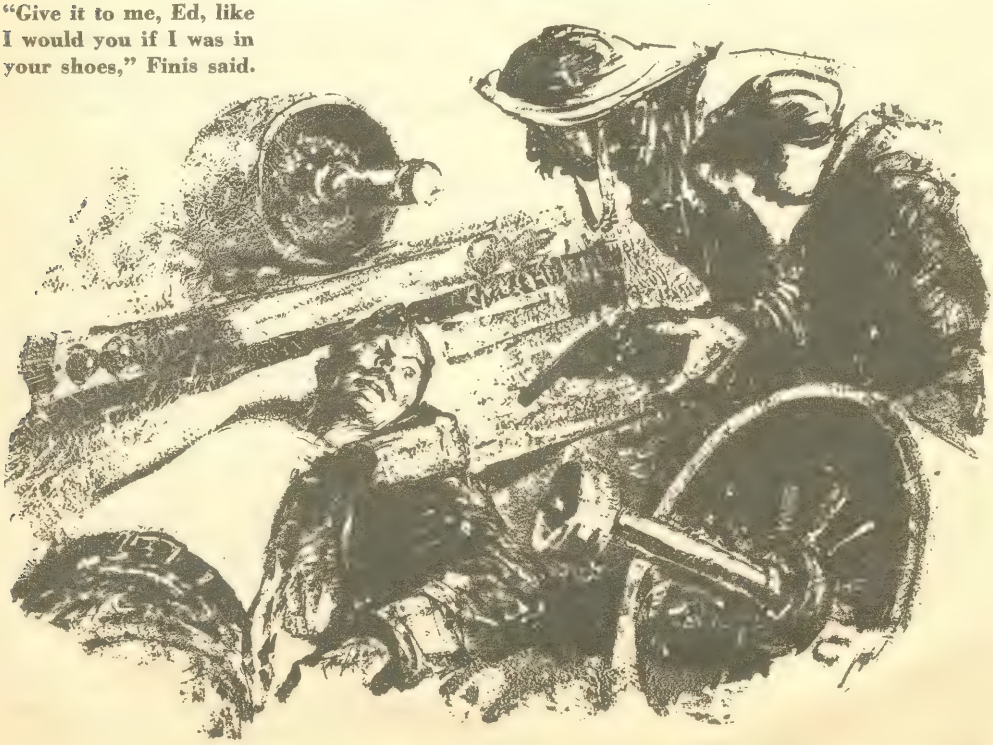
"Yes, Finis, I did," says Will, "and I must say I couldn't do much good for you with Mr. John."

"Well," says Finis, quiet but nasty, "considering everything, preacher, I guess you never tried much, did you?"

I tell you, when Finis said that, I figured he was getting mad. He had been dead set against Will going over to Mission College whenever it first came up. And I reckon he hadn't changed his mind much, not even after Will came home, ordained a minister of the gospel, about a month or two before I came to live here with Uncle Vance.

But now as I think about it, I guess it didn't matter much to Will what Finis thought. He got the call to Big Sandy Chapel

"Give it to me, Ed, like I would you if I was in your shoes," Finis said.



right away after he got home, and he would ride over every Saturday evening, and stay over night at John Lunceford's place, and preach on Sundays and visit around a while in the evening. Then he would stay over at Lunceford's again, and ride back to the mill early so as to be ready to help out if he was needed.

Well, I knew Finis was mad when he said Will never tried to help him out with Mr. John, and then called him "preacher." I had been wondering how it was Finis had quit going over to Lunceford's on his own, and when Will spoke up again, I sure enough found out right away.

Will says, real patient with him, "Now, Finis, you know you got no right to say that. I told you I would do what I could, but Mr. John says he will have no man sitting with Mollie whilst that man is running around nights with all the riffraff in Sword's Gap, and drinking whiskey and raising Cain, and breaking God's laws. And I can't say I could blame him for that, either."

"Oh, no," Finis came back at him, quiet and mean. "Oh, no, you don't hold blame to him. You and your God's laws and your damn psalm-whining. Maybe you ain't over there selling out your own brother, neither. Maybe you ain't after Mollie yourself, Preacher MacCaul—like hell you ain't!"

All the MacCauls have got tempers, but Will always was a mighty good boy, and he answered Finis cool and nice as you please, but kind of like his patience was getting tried.

"Finis, you know better than that. Mollie is a mighty fine girl, and a mighty pretty girl. But I never yet said one word to her for myself, not yes or no. When I first went to stopping over at Mr. John's, I was right ready to stand up for you against him or anybody else. But when I got to hearing how you have been running through these mountains whilst I was off at school, and when I got to hearing who you have been running with, and what you have been doing, I couldn't hold blame to Mr. John. You know yourself that Mollie is too fine a girl to be named along with some you have been named with."

I hadn't really figured Finis was as mad as he must have been by then. For next thing I heard was a crack like you had thrown a big old shagbark hickory nut down on a rock. I ran over to the door of the little room there, and sure enough, Will was up on his feet with a big red welt across his face where Finis had hit him with that piece of rawhide he had been fooling with. Finis had his back to me, but I could see his shoulders was hunched up like he was waiting for Will to come at him.

But Will didn't jump him. His face was white as a rag under that welt, and if you knew the MacCauls like I did, you would have figured for sure Will MacCaul had a mighty strong dose of religion not to give Finis his come-uppance right then. But he just breathed heavy for a minute or two till he got his temper back.

Then he says, "Finis, you had no call to do that. And but for the strength God gives me, brother or not, I would make you pay for it. What I told you is true, and I am not going to argue with you here in front of Tod. Go up to the house and think it over."

But that just seemed like it made Finis madder yet, for he threw the rawhide down on the floor, and he yelled at Will, "To hell with you and your God-strength, Will MacCaul. If you figure you are man enough to whip me, come on. I know damn well what is going on over there to Lunceford's."

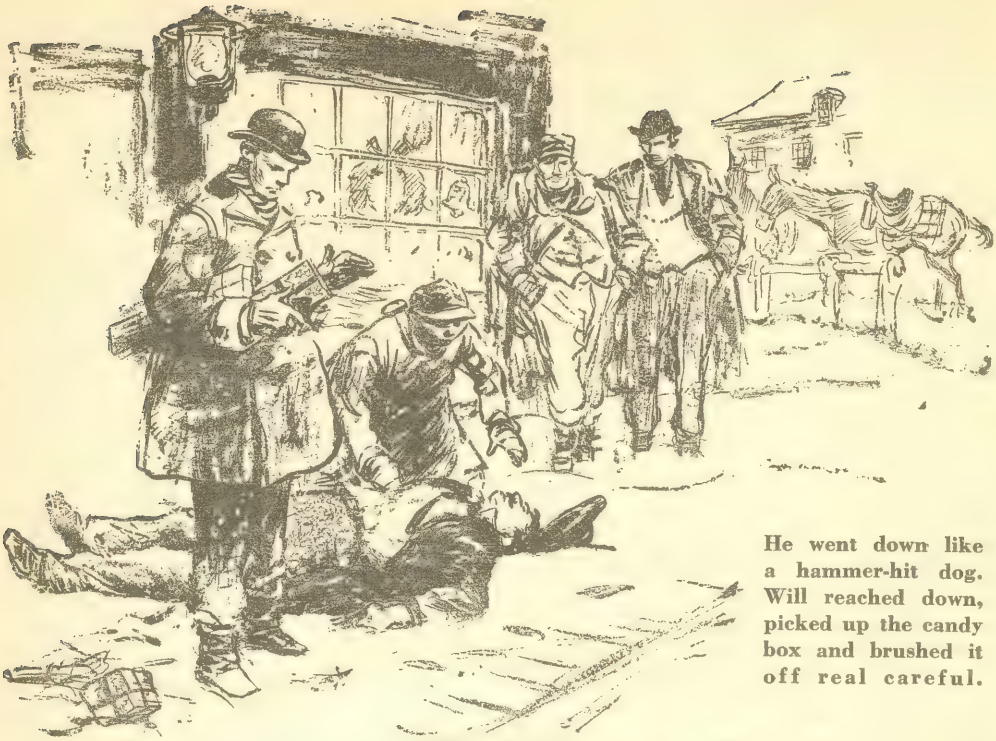
But Will never said another word, and after a minute Finis went on out and up towards the house. But I reckon the more he thought about it, the madder he got. Anyway, when me and Will came up for dinner, Uncle Vance was looking mighty tired and mighty old. He said Finis had got his stuff together and left for Sword's Gap.

In a few days we learned he had got himself a job clerking in Barnes's store over there, and he was living over at Mrs. Morton's boarding place, and that was that.

I STILL figure he was wrong about Will and Mollie then; I reckon he really knew it all along. But, sure enough, what Finis said must have made Will sit up and take notice, and even if he hadn't looked at Mollie as a woman before, he soon did. For the word got around that Mollie was looking forward to Saturdays and Sundays a mighty lot, and if Old Man John Lunceford didn't want a preacher in the family, he better look sharp.

At that, I never blamed Will. When Cousin Mollie was younger, she was the prettiest thing in this county, and Will would of been a good deal less of a MacCaul than he was if he hadn't found it out after a while. And then, too, Will was a better-looking man than Finis, if he was a little quieter, what with that big, broad-shouldered MacCaul build, and his black hair and blue eyes.

So that's how it was by Christmas, and Finis hadn't come anywhere near home since the day he left, and I was figuring pretty soon something was going to pop between him and Will, sure as the world. Well, it did, all right. Saturday before Christmas Will got



He went down like a hammer-hit dog. Will reached down, picked up the candy box and brushed it off real careful.

ready to ride over to Big Sandy, as always. He asked me if I wanted to ride over to Sword's Gap with him and bring back some stuff for Uncle Vance.

Well, I was glad to get to go, seeing it wasn't every day I got to ride up the Gap. And it was mighty pretty that morning. There was snow on the ground about a foot or so deep, and the sun was shining for the first time in about a week.

When we got to Sword's Gap, we went right to Barnes's store to get what Uncle Vance wanted. Finis wasn't there, and I figured it was a pity. So far as I had any idea, he hadn't seen Will to speak to since they had their little run-in at the mill, and I was halfway hoping maybe they could get together and sort of make it up. But he wasn't there, and seeing he wasn't, Will bought a little box of candy, all wrapped up in soft paper, and tied up with a ribbon. He never said yes or no to me about it, but I figured I could guess who was going to eat some of that candy before night.

Well, there we was coming out of the store with Uncle Vance's stuff and Will with his little package under his arm, when up came Finis, right there in the middle of the morning. He looked like he had been making a pretty good night of it with the boys, for he needed a shave bad, and his clothes wasn't none too clean.

WILL made to pass him without a word, but Finis kind of got over in his way, and he kind of looked at Will, and he spit a big blob of twist out in the snow. He says to Will, still spitting, but words this time, "Well, preacher, have you done got so holy you ain't speaking to your own flesh and blood?"

Will just stood there cool as you please, and he says, "Why, hello, Finis. You need a shave."

"God damn you, Will MacCaul. It ain't none of your business if I do or if I don't."

All the loafers in the front part of the store kind of eased out on the sidewalk, no matter if it was pretty cold, just to be there in case. For by this time it was common talk Will and Finis was at outs. But I guess maybe nothing would of happened if Finis hadn't got a good look at the candy box under Will's arm about then. When he saw it, I knew for sure there was going to be the devil to pay right quick. He kind of got red under them whiskers, and he moved right

up against Will so he had him backed up pretty close to the hitch rail in front of the store. For a second it seemed like everything was froze up tighter than the Little Chestnut.

Well, Finis got right up on Will, and he said, low, but kind of thick, like he was having trouble getting the words out, "Damn your soul, Will MacCaul, do you think I don't know you have done sold out your own brother with your damn holy-be-good, and your psalm-singing, so you can get your own self in good and get . . ."

I tell you, Will just let that little old package drop right down from under his arm when he swung. He caught Finis right square in the mouth at the end of a full-arm swing, and down went Finis like a hammer-hit dog. Will reached down and picked up his candy box, and he wiped the snow off the paper and straightened the ribbon, real careful. He looked at the fellows standing there on the sidewalk, but he never said yes or no to them, or me either. Then he stepped over Finis, just like you would step over a hickory log in the middle of the trail, and he got his horse loose from the hitch rack, and got up and rode off toward Big Sandy.

It was three or four minutes yet before Finis so much as moved a peg. I went over to him, and when he started grunting around there in the snow, I said, "Finis, can I help you?"

"I don't need no help, Tod," he said. He got up on his hands and knees and I thought for sure he was going to throw up. But he didn't, and in a minute he got up on his feet. One or two of the fellows that was in front of the store looked like they was going to say something smart, but when he looked at them and they could see his face, they didn't. For he had a kind of funny, pinched-off look, and he was white all around his lips, where there was any place that wasn't bloody. And when the MacCauls get to looking thataway, well, anybody around here knows good and well it is no use to fool around with them.

"Tod," Finis says, and the blood was oozing out of the side of his mouth where Will had mashed his face up pretty bad, "Tod, you get on home. And don't say nothing to your Uncle Vance about this thing, neither. But you do one thing," he says, and his face looked harder than one of them limestone slabs up on the bald side of Beartown, there by the slide. "You tell Will MacCaul, next time you see him, his God ain't going to help him now. You tell him he is a dead man, and by God, I mean it."

Well, other than that, so far as I know, he never said one word to anybody. He went on back to his room, and Clee Bland told me later on that he came back to the store in about a half hour, and worked there all day, just as polite and cool as you please, with his face all swelled up and purple, and his mouth mashed till he couldn't say yes or no.

YOU know, most everybody figured Finis would sure kill Will on Monday, when Will came back from Big Sandy. I was so scared I didn't know whether to turn right or left. I was scared for Will, and I was scared to tell Uncle Vance for fear of Finis. But no, come Monday morning and Will rode up to the house and went to work down at the mill like nothing ever happened at all. I told him what Finis said, but he never answered one word. So I figured he likely didn't see Finis when he came back through Sword's Gap, and then I got to thinking if Finis was going to kill him, he likely would of already done it. And by the end of the week I was feeling a good deal better; and when I went down to Sword's Gap with Uncle Vance on Friday evening, I really wasn't thinking too much about the whole business.

We went to the hardware store to get some belting for the mill, and Old Man Jim Epps was sitting in a chair in front of the stove. When he saw Uncle Vance, he got up out of his chair and walked over and said, right serious, "Vance, I guess you heard what happened up here last week."

"Why yes, Jim," says Uncle Vance, "Will has told me."

That surprised me for Uncle Vance hadn't never mentioned it all week. But I could see now he was right worried.

Old Man Jim just couldn't leave him alone, though. He says, "Vance, I must say some of us are kind of bothered. We figure maybe there will be worse to come."

Well, Uncle Vance turned right square round on Old Man Jim, and he looked at him for maybe a minute before he said a word to him. Uncle Vance never did like meddlers, and he could be a mighty hard man sometimes, and that was one of the times, all right.

"Jim Epps," he says, cold, just staring at him, but more like he wasn't there at all, or wasn't any more account than one of the old saddles hanging over the counter, "Jim Epps, you and me have knowed each other near on to thirty years. And you are a father your own self, and yet you are fool enough to come telling me what I ought to do. You know how you would feel if one of your own boys was come to where Finis is now, drunk all the time, and fighting and

cursing and bringing shame on a good name. But this is no matter of father and son, Jim, and well you know it. Finis is a man grown, and a MacCaul, and so is Will. You know as well as I do that God Almighty Himself can't tell for sure what is going to happen. And whatever it is, it is no man's business but theirs, not mine or yours." And with that he just up and walked out of the store.

WELL, in about two weeks a couple of things happened that made me figure if anything was going to come out between Finis and Will, it would likely be pretty quick. First thing, word got around that Will and Molly Lunceford had gone and set their day for the twenty-first of March. Everybody was right pleased, for it was pretty clear Cousin Will had the makings of a powerful servant of the Lord. He was drawing folks in to Big Sandy from way over back of Brumley, and there was quite a lot of sinners would walk up to the mill on weekdays, just to get him to help wrestle Old Satan.

I was in Sword's Gap the morning Finis heard about it. It was right cold, and I was next to the stove over at Barnes's store, back in the back, talking with some of the fellows. Finis was up at the front, working away. He had sure changed a lot since him and Will had that fight, all right. He wasn't running around near so much, and he was working right steady and hard. But he wasn't near so easy to get along with as he used to be, neither. Seemed like he was just tending to his own business and waiting his chance to get at Will again.

Well, Berne Bland, brother of Clee, came in from over at The Cove. He went on back to the stove, and after a while Finis came back and asked him if he could get him anything. Berne said he wanted some shells and some bolt goods. Then, just to pass the time of day, most likely, but maybe to egg Finis on a little, he kind of grinned at us and he said, "By the way, Finis, I hear you are going to get yourself a new sister."

Finis never said a word, but you could tell he hadn't heard nothing about it before then. He got a little white around the mouth, but he turned around and walked over back of the counter and reached up on the shelf to get Berne his shells. I shook my head at Berne, trying to tell him to let Finis be, but some of the other fellows was grinning at him, and he just couldn't let well enough alone. So while Finis was still over back of the counter, he went on, loud enough so Finis couldn't miss it, "Sure looks like Will has done cut out old Finis with his girl, don't it, fellows?"

Well, if he was looking for trouble, he sure found it. Finis whirled around and slammed one of them big old MacCaul hands down on the counter, and he jumped right over it in front of Berne. He was about half a head taller than Berne, and maybe fifteen pounds heavier. He grabbed Berne by his coat front with both hands, and I tell you straight, he just plumb lifted him off his feet and pitched him right into that solid oak counter, *blam!* It didn't take half a minute. There was Berne, on the floor, drawing up his legs, with all the wind knocked out of him. Old Man Barnes was running back toward the back to see what was going on, and the fellows around the stove, me right along with them, was so surprised they never even moved.

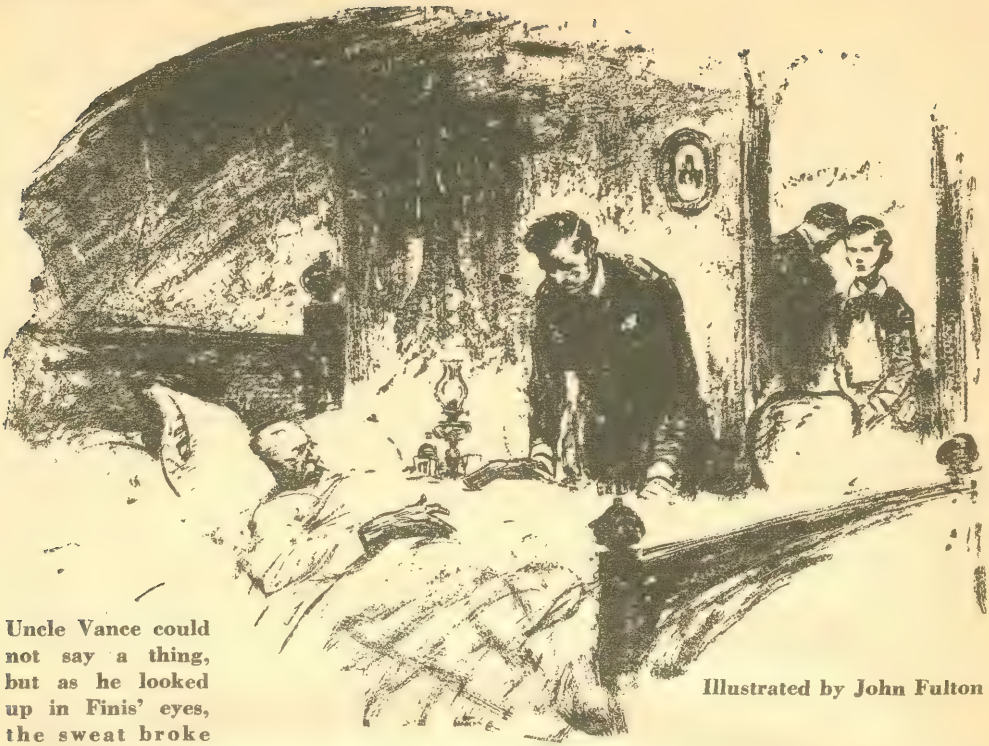
Finis was standing over Berne, and by the time Old Man Barnes got back there Berne was looking up off the floor, scared half to death. Finis says to him, talking in a sort of whisper, "Damn you, Berne Bland, I got no girl to be cut out with. And if you are talking about Will MacCaul, let me tell you one thing, he ain't going to marry nobody. Now you get your stuff and get back where you come from."

Well, soon as he could, Berne sure got. Old Man Barnes started to give Finis the dickens, but after he got a good look at him, he just shut up and went back up front. I reckon he figured like the rest of us, Berne had started more than he was man enough to finish. But it fed the talk going round, and I reckon some of the folks would of laid bets, if it hadn't been Will was a preacher and it would look kind of bad, betting on whether one of the Lord's servants was going to be killed off by his own brother inside of maybe thirty days.

Right after all that, Uncle Vance had his stroke. It was on the very first day of March. Me and Will was down at the mill; and about ten-thirty I went back up to the house for some tools, and there was Uncle Vance on the floor in the kitchen, plumb unconscious. I got him in the bed and got Will, and he saddled up and rode for the doctor, up at The Cove. Well, I stayed with Uncle Vance, and he never moved before they got back. After the doctor had been in with him a while, Will came out of the room and told me to go on in.

Uncle Vance's eyes was wide open, and it looked like he was trying to say something. But he couldn't say a thing except kind of make a little noise, and he couldn't move any part of his body but the fingers on his right hand, just a little bit.

Well, when the doctor got ready to go, he told Will and me it looked like Uncle Vance



Uncle Vance could not say a thing, but as he looked up in Finis' eyes, the sweat broke out on his face.

Illustrated by John Fulton

was done for, and Will asked him how long he could live. He said maybe a month, maybe a few hours. So Will went up the road and got the Widow Connett to come and nurse Uncle Vance. And he told me to ride in to Sword's Gap to tell Finis, and ask him if he wanted to come to see his daddy before it was too late.

I saddled up and went right away. I tell you, I was mighty low that day. Finis never said much when I told him, but he went over to Old Man Barnes and told him what had happened, and then he went back and got himself a horse and we came right straight on back out here.

You know, Finis hadn't stepped foot on this place since him and Will had that quarrel down at the mill. Well, he walked right in Uncle Vance's room, and he looked down, and he said, "Daddy, I am mighty sorry to see you like this."

Will was in a chair next to the bed, and Mrs. Connett was fooling around in the room, but you would of thought there wasn't nobody there but Finis and Uncle Vance, for all the notice Finis took of either one of them. Uncle Vance couldn't say a thing, but he just looked at Finis and the sweat broke out on his face, and he made some little noises, and kind of wiggled his fingers toward where Will was in the chair. Just like he was asking Finis to make it up with Will.

But if Finis figured it that way, you couldn't tell it. He just looked down at Uncle Vance a minute longer, and he says again, "I'm sure enough sorry, daddy. I hope you get better right away." And he turned around and walked out.

Will jumped up from where he was and he went right out after Finis.

When me and Mrs. Connett got out on the porch, Will had caught up with Finis, right down there by that very gate, and when Will spoke to him for the first time since he had hit him over in Sword's Gap, I could hear every word they said.

Will said, "Finis, I'm glad you made it out here to see daddy. God will bless you for coming, and I take it kind of you, myself."

I sure hoped Finis would see Will was trying to make up with him, and do the right thing. But no, like all the MacCauls, he was

too stubborn. You could hear the gravel grit in his throat, as you might say, when he answered Will.

"I don't hold it no more than duty, Will MacCaul, to speak a word to my own daddy on his dying bed," says Finis, "but to hell with you and your thanks and your God and His blessing. If you got to pray, pray for your own self. For it is mighty near time when your God better be handy."

Then he just turned on around and walked out the gate.

I hadn't had no part in the trouble between Will and Finis, one way or the other, till then. But a couple of days later Uncle Vance died, and after the funeral Old Man Lunceford called me off to one side.

"Tod, I hear Mrs. Connett has spread it Will and Finis had words here the other day."

"They sure enough did, Mr. John," I said.

"Damn that Finis! I don't want nothing to happen to Will. It would be mighty hard on Mollie. Tod, is Will carrying a gun?"

"Why no, I reckon not," I said, right much surprised.

"Well, I ain't one to look for the worst," he said, and I could tell he was right worked up, "but there ain't no hate like brother hate, just like there ain't no love like brother love. If I was you, Tod, I would see if I couldn't get Will to look out for himself."

I told him I would see what I could do, but when I tried to talk to Will about it, he said it wouldn't be according to the Book to go heeled for his own brother, and he just shut me right up. I reckon he figured the whole thing was in the Lord's hands by then, for I knew he wasn't fool enough to figure Finis wouldn't shoot him down if he took a mind to.

WELL, the twenty-first of March fell on a Saturday that year. The weather had turned from cold to rainy, and a few folks had been riding over once in a while with some corn they needed ground. So Will and me was keeping the mill open weekdays, mainly to be accommodating. Finis hadn't yet showed his hand, yes or no, but the closer it got to Will's wedding, the more I got worried.

Friday night before the big day, Ed Murray came over. He was a good friend of Will's and studying to be a doctor. I noticed right away he had a gun inside his coat. I could see the bulge, but I don't believe Will ever noticed it. So I figured Old Man John had passed the word to Ed, seeing Will wasn't going to carry a gun for himself, and told Ed to get on over here and ride to Big Sandy with Will next day. Anyway, Ed followed Will around like he was Will's puppy all Friday evening, and I heard him get up two or three times in the night and move around in the house. I tell you, I was plumb scared to death by then.

Saturday morning, though, everything seemed like it was going to be all right, even if it wasn't much of a day for a wedding. It had started raining about midnight, just a little at first and then just pouring solid. You know how these spring rains are in the mountains here. Once they start, it's just like sheets of water is coming down off of the sides of Brumley and Big A, and what with the lightning flashing and the thunder rolling up and down you don't hardly know where you are. When we got up it was still coming down heavy, and the clouds was down so close around the house here you couldn't see the mill, nor even Brumley yonder from out the back window.

About eight o'clock, Will said, "Well, boys, if we are going to open up the mill this morning, we had best get to it."

"There ain't no use in it at all, Will," I told him. "You know mighty well nobody ain't going to be fool enough to get out in a rain like this. And besides, if you ever took a day off it ought to be today."

But Will wanted to go on and open up, so him and Ed and me got our raincoats and pulled on our boots, and started out. We really went down the path in a hurry. It was pretty dark still, and the mud was slipping around under our feet and every now and then the thunder would crack out across the ridges over yonder, and echo back up the gap, and the lightning was flickering all up and down the trees there by the Little Chestnut.

We run up on the mill porch, and I figured Will never would get that big old door opened up, but he did, and we all jumped inside. Well, I shook the water out of my eyes, and just then a big flash of lightning lit up that old dark mill room like it was day. I tell you, I like to have died where I stood.

For right there in front of me was Finis. He was in one of them rawhide-bottomed chairs, kind of leaning back against that big old iron grinder. And he had his gun out, resting on his knee and pointing right square at me and Will and Ed. "Come on in, gents," he says, kind of quiet and cold. "I never did like to see nobody get left out in the rain."

I tell you now, it seems like a bad dream every time I think about it. The rain was driving in through the big door behind us, but we never felt the drops. That old room was dark and gloomy-looking, and we could just make out Finis fairly good, his shape and all, but we couldn't see him real good except

when a big flash of lightning would light up the place and kind of flicker and glitter on that old gun barrel.

At that, it was Will spoke to him first. I got to say for Will, he showed he was a brave man that day, for he was looking Old Death right in the face, and no doubt about it. He never moved, though, and when he opened his mouth he spoke loud enough for Finis to hear him good and clear.

"Finis," Will says, "Finis, you are about to make a big mistake."

Finis just set there, kind of leaning back, and he just laid his words down, slow and steady, like you would lay flat rocks on a grave. "No mistake, Will MacCaul," he says, "your time is come, and you know it."

Well, Ed was fooling with his raincoat, real easy, hoping, I guess, to get inside and get at his gun, but Finis shifted his gun barrel just a little, and Ed quit right quick.

"Tod, you and Ed stay right where you're at," Finis told us, calm and quiet. "No call for me to harm you, neither one. But I will kill you if you move a inch. This here is between me and Will MacCaul."

Like Ed said later, there really wasn't nothing to do but what he said. My legs just plain let go, and down I went. Ed did too. A couple of little old swallows flew down out of the rafters and went across in front of Finis, and back up again. It was getting a little lighter, and we could see his face was set, kind of drawed up and pinched-looking. When a flash of light would come, his eyes would shine like a animal's does, back in the brush at night.

Well, I guess Will figured it was all up. He says to Finis, "Well, Finis, I got one last thing to say to you."

"Go ahead, preacher, unless you want to pray first," says Finis.

"I don't need to pray, for I am ready," says Will, cool as if he was just opening a prayer meeting. "But I want to say you have sent your daddy to his grave from worrying over you, and you are fixing to curse the name of MacCaul with the curse of Cain. All I hope is God will teach you the error of your ways before they hang you. And that is the last word I have for you. Now if you are fixing to shoot me, well, go ahead."

Well, I tell you now, the good Lord was just plain sitting up there right on top of Old Brumley, just waiting for Will MacCaul to get the last word out of his mouth. For he hadn't no more than got his jaws shut together, nor Finis hadn't had time to say yes, no, or howdy, when there was a awful flash, and the biggest ripping, tearing sound you ever heard, and then a terrible snapping kind of a crack, and it looked like that mill fell right in on us.

Next thing I knew, Ed Murray had me by the shoulder. "Tod, Tod, get up from there," he was yelling right in my ear. He dragged me up on my feet, and when I got the fog out of my head, well, it was really a caution to see what that old lightning bolt had done to the mill. I couldn't see Will anywhere, but I could see a lot plainer than I could before she struck. For that bolt had ripped the top part of the little storeroom all up. And it had split open the big old fifty-gallon drums of kerosene Uncle Vance kept up there, and the whole mill was on fire all over the top part and about halfway down the side walls.

THE rain was hissing down through a big hole in the roof and spitting on the fire like when you let go a mouthful of juice against a red-hot stove belly, but it wasn't having much luck putting out the fire.

Well, I hadn't no more than looked around good, when I like to turned to jelly inside. For there was Finis, down on the floor, right in front of me. I guess the Lord was really figuring on teaching him a lesson the hard way, all right. That big old grinder he had been leaning on was knocked plumb off its rock base. It was flat out on the floor with all that weight ten men couldn't move, and it was pinning Finis by the right arm. It had caught his whole arm, I tell you, right up past the elbow, and he couldn't have got away, no matter how he tried. He was conscious, too, looking right up at all that fire in the attic and on the side walls, and bound to be knowing what was going to happen. I must say, Cousin Finis was all MacCaul, and he never flinched, and no matter what was in his heart when he come into that mill, right that minute I was ready to trade anything I had or ever hoped to have to get him loose.

"Tod, boy," he said, almost like he was when I first went to live with Uncle Vance, "where is Will?"

"Oh Lord, Finis, I don't know." I was crying and dizzy and half out of my head. I grabbed Ed by the arm and yelled at him, "Get that grinder off him, Ed. Get it off him!"

"No use, Tod," says Finis. "No use, Ed. A dozen of us couldn't move her."

Well, Ed and me tried a minute; all the time the attic floor was beginning to drop more and more little burning pieces down on the main floor. We figured it wasn't but minutes before the big beams in the roof would go, and if Finis wasn't mashed, he would have to burn.

Ed commenced unbuckling his coat, and when he did that I started yelling, for I knew

what he was thinking. Sure enough, he got his gun out of his pocket and he leaned down to Finis and said to him, "Finis, we ain't going to make it."

"I know it, Ed," says Finis, and his face never changed color. nor his voice didn't break, even if the look in his eyes would of made you sick to see it. "Give it to me, Ed, like I would you if I was in your shoes," he says.

Well, I couldn't stand it, and I don't know what would of happened if it hadn't been that all of a sudden here came Will, tearing in through the big door with Uncle Vance's double-bitted wood-axe in his hand.

He ran over to where we was, and I tell you now, he looked awful. His face was bleeding where the bolt had knocked him on the floor, and his clothes was all ripped up.

He took just a second to set himself, and he kind of motioned to Finis to turn away his head. Then he took just one good solid swing, and I tell you, he cut Cousin Finis' arm off right below the shoulder, clothes and all, neat as a pin. Ed Murray yelled, "Oh, my God!" and Finis just fainted dead away.

Will dropped the axe, and me and Ed got our senses back, and we all grabbed Finis and carried him right out of the mill, just before the whole roof started caving in.

We laid him down in the rain outside, and Ed and Will got a tie on his arm and got the blood stopped. Me, soon as I could get up to the house and catch a horse, I took off for The Cove to get the doctor.

Well, when the doctor and me got back, he went right into Uncle Vance's room and started working on Finis. Pretty soon Ed came down on the porch, and he says to me, "Tod, come in here."

I WENT in Will's room, and there was Will, on the bed. I figured maybe he was bad hurt, but no, he was asleep. "Tod," Ed says, kind of low, so as not to wake him, "Tod, he can't talk."

"How do you mean, he can't talk?"

"Just what I say. After we got Finis in bed

"I think he's swallowed some flower seeds, Doctor!"

I started asking Will how come he thought of getting that axe to cut him loose. Well, Tod, he couldn't say a word. He wrote down on a piece of paper and said his voice was gone."

"Well," I said, "we got two men to doctor now. And how is Will going to get himself married?"

Believe me, I need not of worried about that part. When the doctor came in to look at Will, Ed sent me over to Big Sandy to tell the Luncefords what was going on. Time we got back, me and Molly and Mr. John and Uncle Dyer Martin, the circuit rider from up at Bethel Chapel, I already could see it would take more than no voice to keep Will from getting married. There really wasn't no stopping Mollie. She stood right up with Will, and when it was time for him to say, "I do," she just said it for him, right straight. All he did was kind of nod his head, and smile, and there they was, man and wife.

Well, it was a kind of odd thing, sure enough. Finis, soon as he got up, plumb left the country. Seemed like he wasn't holding a thing against Will nor nobody else, but he just up and left. Nobody had any idea where he was till about a year later.

WILL and Mollie and me was living here at the home place, and Will still hadn't got so he could say a thing. It was pretty hard on him, what with wanting to preach like he did, and having to sit and wait and wonder if he was ever going to say another word. But one day, just about a week before the baby was due, Mollie's daddy and mother came over to see how she was making out. I could tell old Mr. John was powerful excited, and sure enough, pretty soon he called me out back.

"Tod," he said, "the good Lord has gone and done it again. Finis is a preacher!"

"What do you know!" I was so surprised I didn't know left from right.

"Yes," he says, "and more than that, he is over at our place this very minute. He got himself ordained a special evangelist near six months ago, over in Tennessee, and he is going to take the call to Big Sandy and preach for Will if we will have him."

Well, he said to let Will wait till next Sunday and learn for himself. I tell you now, I never was really sure Finis got all his religion on one dose. I kind of figured he must of thought, in bed in that back room, how it was really all his fault Will couldn't carry on his work. And I figured it might pretty well be Finis had decided he owed Will a honest debt, and aimed to pay it like a man and a MacCaul.

However it might have been, I must say for Finis, he was truly a powerful preacher. When Will got over his first surprise at seeing him, come Sunday, it was time for services. Will was right up on the platform by Finis, and even if he couldn't say a thing, you could tell he was mighty pleased, and mighty happy.

Maybe Finis never had Will's touch, but I must say it was something to see, the way he stood up there, right in front of all the folks that knew him, and knew what he had done, and just stuck that stump of his right arm out in front of him where everybody had to look at it, and testified to how the good Lord God had give him the chance to pay up for his mistakes. I tell you, there's been many a time since, when he would get up and hammer on the pulpit with his big old left hand and pound down on Old Sin and Old Death and Old Satan, when you would of figured mighty well there wasn't none of the Forces of Evil could stand against Brother Finis MacCaul, no, not a minute.

BUT that day he preached for Will. He preached in Will's church, and he preached on Will's favorite text. How he found it out I never did learn. It was the one about Elijah and the ravens, and a good one, even if Finis never was able to get it quite in his head that ravens was one kind of birds and buzzards was another. He told us that no matter how lost in Sin one of God's children may be, and no matter how far in the Desert of Evil he may have straggled, God can always send his birds—"His Blessed Buzzards," Finis called them—right out to the lost one.

And then he told us how far he had got, his own self. How he was about to curse himself and the name MacCaul with the mark of Cain, and how God, seeing a buzzard just plain wasn't fast enough to save him, took a lightning bolt to do the job. I tell you, he was a mighty preacher that day. Will was up there sitting off to one side of him, and the tears got to running down his cheeks. I could see the sweat standing out on his face, and his mouth was twitching like he wanted to get up and say something too. Everybody could see him, and I reckon it would of moved the hardest man on the old slab benches that day to see them two brothers.

Finis, he was pretty well worked up. His voice was breaking, but he was really pouring it on by then. He banged that left hand of his down on the Book, and he held that stump of his right arm right out in front of him, and he says, kind of half-sobbing, "And there, my home folks, my good friends, right there is the best trade the Lord God ever let me

make. In His Mercy, He traded a rotten arm, with a hand that was curled around the butt of a pistol and fixing to mark a good name with the curse of Cain, for the immortal soul of his servant, Finis MacCaul!"

I was watching Will more than Finis. Will was white as a bedsheet, and his arms was jerking on the chair where he was sitting. Sweat and tears was mixed on his face. And just as Finis got the last words out of his mouth, Will ripped his collar wide open, and he jumped up out of his chair, and without stopping a second, he yelled out, "Amen, Brother Finis, and praise the Lord!"

Well, you ought to been there! I never yet witnessed a greater flood of blessings showered down in any chapel in these hills. Everybody just plain went wild with the Holy Ghost and a second miracle, right there amongst them. I tell you now, the whole thing was living proof of what the good Lord in His Mercy can do with common clay like you and me.

THE END

THE GYPSY'S WARNING

by Henry Prouty

Argosy will pay $10 for each true experience of psychic phenomena accepted for publication. Send us yours. No manuscripts can be returned. Address Mystic Experiences Editor, Argosy, 205 East 42nd St., New York 17, N. Y.

UNTIL I was ten years old, I often visited my Uncle Charlie and spent many vacations on his farm near Joplin, Missouri. He was interested in horses and kept a stable of thoroughbreds. He also owned a livery stable in town.

One summer, at a carnival, an old gypsy was telling fortunes and Uncle Charlie, Aunt Martha, my father and mother and several of my cousins went in. Nobody had any idea of taking anything she said seriously.

Everything followed the regular routine of fortune telling, the usual sort of thing. But when Uncle Charlie took his turn, the gypsy became much upset.

When she peered into her crystal ball a look of horror passed over the old hag's face. Uncle Charlie didn't believe in such "monkey business." He told her to go ahead and tell what she saw.

"It is horrible," she croaked. "You are a lover of horses, but three years from today you will be killed instantly by one."

As she finished speaking, she slumped across the table in a fit of unconsciousness. The women massaged her hands and face and loosened her clothing and she finally came around.

Mother helped her into the back of her tent, where she had a cot. As soon as she was able to speak, she told mother, "Don't let your brother go near any horses. It is true. He will be killed by one, three years from today."

I heard the family discuss the matter many times during the course of the next few months. The upshot of the affair was that Uncle Charlie sold his livery stable and all his horses and moved into town. He made a good investment in a machinery and renting business in Joplin.

He kept entirely away from horses, and the family almost forgot about the gypsy's warning. One afternoon, a windstorm came up quite suddenly. Uncle Charlie lived only four blocks from his renting establishment and he decided to go down and close the windows and take in some of his signs.

There was a livery stable on his route. A large wooden horse had been placed above the entrance as an advertisement for the stable. Just as Uncle Charlie passed, this horse was blown from its place on the roof and fell, striking him on the head and killing him instantly.

When the family had recovered somewhat from their grief, they realized that the tragedy had happened exactly three years to the day from the time of the gypsy's warning.

by Gordon M. Atkins

FOOTBALL trophies are the darnedest things. They run all the way from turtles to locomotive bells.

Today a dignified ceremony attends their presentation to the winning eleven, but once they were as bitterly fought for as the game itself. Sometimes it took the entire student body to protect a team's prize.

Earliest of these trophies was the Stanford Ax, which was forged in 1899 to symbolize Stanford's famous ax yell. Rival California undergraduates soon conceived the idea of capturing it. In a struggle more furious than any Stanford-California gridiron classic, the California lads succeeded. From then on the ax was so securely guarded that it remained in California's possession for more than twenty years. Finally, a mere handful of Stanford students posed as newsreel cameramen and seized it with startling ease. They locked it in a bank vault for safe-keeping, but afterward it was mounted on a mahogany base and placed in competition.

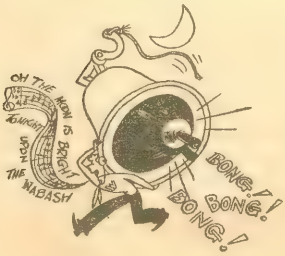
Sudden and mysterious disappearances did not end with football's early days. During the summer of 1931, Michigan's famous "Little Brown Jug" up and "walked" out of its case—under circumstances that have never been fully explained. Michigan used a substitute as prize for the annual Michigan-Minnesota game. Two years later the original jug was found in a clump of bushes on the Michigan campus, none the worse for its long absence. First used as a water jug by Michigan's trainer in 1903, it is one of the oldest trophies in point of service.

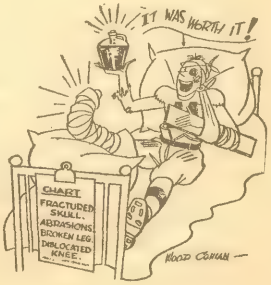
One trophy that isn't likely to disappear suddenly is the old locomotive bell, the prize for which Wabash College and DePauw compete. Four students *might* move it; eight would have a better chance. Since 1890 the tiny Monon railroad has transported teams, students and alumni back and forth between Greencastle and Crawfordsville, homes of the Indiana schools. When the old locomotive which made the runs was retired, its bell was presented to the rivals. Now, highly polished, its gleaming bronze represents the Old Gold of DePauw, its brilliant red carriage the Scarlet of Wabash.

Nebraska and Missouri also compete for a bell, one that for a hundred years had summoned to service the Negro members of a country church. Very often, however, trophies have been born out of no such peaceful history but out of a free-for-all fight. This was the case in Kansas, where students and followers of Ottawa and Baker Universities frequently invaded each other's campus, bringing destruction to property. Finally, weary of standing guard through the long, cold nights of "invasion week," students of both schools met and decided upon the present eagerly sought prize. This is a reproduction in clay of a Baker wildcat and an Ottawa Indian brave, mounted jointly.

A carved wooden turtle, named Illibuck II, is the prize in the annual contest between the Fighting Illini of Illinois and the Buckeyes of Ohio State. Illibuck II's predecessor was a live turtle but he died after one season.

Mementoes of stirring gridiron rivalries are almost as numerous as the games played. There's "Kit Carson," an old Springfield army rifle, procured in trade with an Indian many years ago by Athletics Director J. F. McHale of the University of Arizona and presented by him to the winner of the annual Arizona-New Mexico game. Idaho University and Montana State have as a prize a wooden stein, Wittenberg (Ohio) and Ohio Wesleyan an Indian skull, while the future schoolmasters of Northwest and Northeast Missouri State Teachers Colleges contest, appropriately, for a willow cane.





hunt is over or we could go away—on the *Nootka,* if you liked. Father is a machine, implacable in business; but he's a generous man away from his desk. And he'll take enough out of Alaska for us all. Think of yourself, Jay. And remember one thing: I have a woman's greed. I couldn't share a man. Not with a lost hope. Not with Alaska—"

Her hands came up to the back of his head, pulling him down once more. He sat erect, presently, staring hard across the room. He had not expected this. He had felt regrets, coming down from the Inlet. Nora had seemed a challenge, an unattainable woman, in the beginning. He had wanted her. And realization of her duplicity had brought a sense of loss. Now he didn't know. She was proud, and he believed a proud woman could not deal so unreservedly without earnestness. It was a pleasant vista she had opened. And it might be that some compromise could be reached which would afford Maitland his profit and at the same time protect the interests of hunters like Rezanov.

Burnett was aware that Nora had woven a strong spell. Desire for a woman like this did not die because of mere recognition of tricky dealing.

"I don't know, Nora," he said slowly. "I've been too much a fool to be sure of anything. But I'll talk to Whit. I'll see what he offers."

She rose eagerly and stepped into the hall. Burnett followed her. She crossed the hall and opened a door.

"Jay is here, Father," she said. "He wants to talk to you."

She smiled at Burnett. Her hand caught his for a moment. He stepped past her into Whitman Maitland's study and the door closed behind him.

MAITLAND was standing by the front window. He was flawlessly dressed and groomed. His face was pink with care and only a little rounded by good living and advancing years. He was of medium build, suave and perfectly controlled—a flawless archtype of a class of men rising in the States; men who worked always within four walls, far removed from the eventual violence their operations induced, building fortunes out of paper and the manipulation of others.

Maitland was a big man. Associates in New York and Washington and San Francisco spoke enviously of his genius for discovering opportunity. Looking at him, Burnett was swept by a realization that this stay in Sitka must have been a difficult exile for the man. The waiting must have been a burden. And the planning. The petty political conniving necessary to circumvent the integrity of an obscure Russian prince obsessed with his obligation to the trading company from which he drew his pay as chief agent.

"I've been expecting you, Burnett," Maitland said tonelessly. "You're late. The *Nootka's* been at mooring since four o'clock."

Jay nodded. "I've been with Nora."

Maitland crossed the room to his desk and dropped into the chair behind it. "That's a place to begin. What about you and Nora?"

Burnett frowned. "We'll leave that between Nora and me, Whit," he said stonily. "I won't be baited with Nora, one way or the other! It's all open now. We play a clean table, Whit. We've both got our eyes open. I'm one man out of fifteen or eighteen hundred, here. Why do you crowd me?"

"It's simple, Jay," Maitland said. "You're broke. I'm holding a note against your ship that you can't pay. When Parker boards her tomorrow, he'll have Russian Guards with him. He won't go overboard again. But that isn't enough. I've had you rolling down-grade here for six months, but you've stayed on. Why? That's bothered me. Naturally, I had advance information—information that cost me a lot of money to get—that the States would buy Alaska. There's a possibility you had stumbled across the same information. I've been building toward taking the opportunity I saw would rise from the cession. You might have seen this opportunity too.

"And you're a dangerous kind of man, Burnett. You danced with Nora the first night you met her. You've come freely in and out of my house. But at the same time you've bellied to a bar with men like Politof and some of the trappers up the coast. You've cast yourself a big shadow among them. I'm too old a hand to be fooled as you've fooled them. There's something behind your red-white-and-blue talk about the future of Alaska and the security of the colonials under American rule."

Burnett compressed his lips but made no answer.

"I'm afraid of that something, Jay," Maitland went on. "I remember there was a Captain Burnett of the privateer *Hornet*—since renamed the *Nootka*—who won a Confederate medal of honor and considerable prize money playing hell with the Union's southern blockade during the crucial months of the war. I remember this Captain Burnett was sharp enough to get his ship south around Cape

Horn before the Union Navy got around to disarming him after armistice. I remember he was smart enough to take refuge in the foreign waters of Russian America. It adds up to a showdown, Jay. I have to figure you in."

"How?" Burnett said.

"This way: You put yourself and your ship under command of Ben Parker as commodore of my fleet or you leave the *Nootka* where she lies now and get out of Alaska before the ceremony tomorrow."

"If I don't, Whit?" Burnett asked softly.

Maitland picked up a worn sheet of paper from the desk and handed it across. Burnett saw it was the cargo inventory of a Russian ship which had sailed from Sitka for the Chinese fur markets a season before. It listed skins ranging from the priceless sea-otter to muskrat, and the company auditors had appraised the cargo at three hundred and fifty-five thousand roubles.

"That was the take of one ship in one season under the *zapooska,*" Maitland breathed. "Two and a half million dollars in one hull. I'm putting ten ships out into the islands of the Horn. Friends in Washington guarantee me one season with no control and no regulation. Figure it. Twice as much per ship, at least. Ten ships instead of one. Upwards of fifty million dollars. What does anything amount to against that? You know the answer, Jay. Take my offer, as is, or you'll go back to the States in a box!"

Burnett nodded. His anger had begun to run strongly again—an instinctive reaction to threat. What did Nora think he would swallow, sending him in to face this kind of stand? Did a woman think she could trade herself for a man's pride? Nora couldn't be that big a fool. She had only been trying to draw his teeth again.

He smiled grimly at Maitland. "There's only one trouble with the whole thing, Whit," he said gently. "You haven't got the *Nootka* yet and you haven't even got a fair start at guessing how much trouble I can be when the last line's down!"

He reached out with deceptive ease and caught the lapels of Maitland's jacket in one hand. He hauled the startled man forward and wiped the hard palm of his other hand across the pink, sagging face in a stinging blow.

"A million dollars alone doesn't make a a man big or tough in this country, Whit," he said. "Just the size of his shoes and the way he sticks to his friends. You keep out of my tracks from here on!"

He turned and stepped out into the hall. He heard the latch of Nora's door rattle, but before she could open it and come out to him he had jerked open the street door and plunged out into the night.

CHAPTER FOUR

BURNETT crossed the street and dropped onto the steps of a baker's shop to load and light his pipe. A faint wave of the warmth stirred in him by Nora's ardor returned. He wondered if he had not judged her too harshly. He could have gone a little easier with Maitland, giving the man room to maneuver. Something might have come of it, then. He could have called Nora in. She might have added weight when it was needed. But now that was done.

There was still Farrell. But if Farrell could not offer a way to salvage the *Nootka* under guise of commissioning her, Burnett realized that his one hope of retaining control of the ship lay in the strange, reckless woman Alexei Politof had produced.

He pondered a moment over going back to Politof's. If they could talk in private, without the Dunnevan girl. . . . He broke off the thought and swore. The fallacy there was obvious. Alexei had agreed to push Rezanov's plan to petition the American commissioner for appointment of the *Nootka* as a patrol boat. But as soon as Rezanov was gone, he had blandly produced Sharon Dunnevan and her scheme. A man astride two horses could help nobody.

His mind swung back to Nora again. He had condemned her for dragging him within reach of her father's baited hooks in the first place under guise of slowly succumbing to his advances. Prostitution. The label stuck. But it applied as well to the Dunnevan girl's bold, almost masculinely direct progress toward her purpose.

Burnett tamped his pipe, and fished for a match. He stopped in mid-motion, his attention caught by movement on the walk in front of Maitland's house. A muffled figure had halted there. While he watched, the lights were snuffed out in Nora's wing of the ground floor. The waiting figure immediately moved carefully up under the window of Whit Maitland's study. A signal must have passed. A side door opened and the figure entered.

Burnett whistled and guardedly touched fire to his pipe. He clamped the bit tightly between his teeth and remained motionless.

It was a long wait, possibly two hours. In the end, the figure reappeared, crossing the street above Burnett. He peered closely as she passed the entryway in which he sat and caught a momentary glimpse of the handsome, predatory features of Marya Politof.

Burnett rose when the woman turned the corner below. So, he reflected, Maitland had not been able to find a new channel through which to approach the chief agent of the Russian company. He had followed a well marked trail. If Marya Politof had a virtue—and Burnett had doubted it since the first time he had met her—it was her close friendship with the wife of the Agent.

As he shoved away from the entry, Jay felt easier than he had in weeks. One uncertainty was dead. He glanced at the house across the street with a flat grin. Nora and her father were in full silhouette in his mind, now. He was guessing no longer. There was rotten fibre under the bright burnish of the urban polish both of them wore so easily. It explained much. Nora's ardor earlier in the evening, for example. Like father, like daughter.

THERE was a large blackboard in the lobby of the St. Petersberg Hotel. The fact that Gilbert Farrell's name was not chalked up on it was indication that the government man was absent from his quarters. On impulse, Burnett located the floor clerk.

"I see Mr. Farrell is out. Has he had callers this evening—a deputation, maybe?"

The clerk looked startled, then grinned. "That or a fisherman's convention. Sam Tamlik, from up the coast, came in with a little Russian and half of The Ranche, I think. Poor M'sieu Farrell!"

"Was Politof with them?"

"Alexei? No, *m'sieu.*"

Burnett returned to the street. Below the hotel he saw a knot of men on the far walk. He recognized Ben Parker among them. They moved up toward the town after a little, and Burnett drifted down to the waterfront. He found an Aleut asleep beside his *bidarka.* He woke the man, offered a coin, and pointed out the *Nootka's* riding lights. The Aleut launched the little skin boat and Burnett settled himself in the forward manhole in its tightly stretched skin deck. . . .

Jonsson was asleep in a hammock aft the deck house. Jay dumped him onto the deck without warning. He came up groggily, his big hands balled and a quick truculence thrusting immediately to the surface. His clearing eyes identified Burnett and he swore.

"You might try setting a powder keg off under me some time for variety, Jay!" he growled. "You did good ashore?"

Burnett held up an empty hand. "I did not. Didn't even get around to buying myself a meal. But Farrell wasn't at the hotel, so that's still pending. And Politof has turned up something we might use if we have to."

"The devil with Politof!" Nils grumbled. "It's that woman ashore that troubles me. A prettied-up, cut-throating wench with a way to her that's hooked you every time so far. Damned if I trust you, Jay. You still hold she scuttled you?"

"I know it now, Nils," Burnett answered. "The news is out. Her old man's plans are on the fire. He's buying all the supplies and trade goods and the company's fleet of ships. Ben Parker wasn't bragging on that. He's

"Well, what'll you have? I'm a talking dog."

commodore, all right. And he's taking the whole fleet out on an unlimited kill as soon as the Russian laws are tossed out."

"We should have seen that. It had to be a kill. No wonder Rezanov and Sam Tamlick were smoky-eyed. That white-gilled son—"

Burnett cut him off with a laugh. "Cooky turned in yet?"

"He has," Nils said. "But I set a pot of coffee on a spell ago. And there's a can of bully on the cutting table."

Jay chuckled and started across the deck.

Nils called after him, "Say, there was an envelope come aboard for you a couple of hours ago. I put it on your desk in the main cabin."

Burnett went below. The envelope bulked large on the littered top of his desk. It was addressed to him in an unfamiliar hand. He ripped an end from it and tilted it. A sheaf of currency spilled out onto the table. A sheet of note paper stuck in the envelope. With unsteady fingers he pulled it out and snapped it open.

> CAPTAIN BURNETT:
> Alexei says this is the right amount. If it is a bluff, can you meet it?
>
> SHARON DUNNEVAN

Burnett lifted the currency and leafed it. The sheaf contained five thousand dollars. He stared at it for a long moment. The girl was shrewd. This money would free the ship.

But Sharon Dunnevan had been a little premature. This was not the last toss of the dice. There would be no peace with Maitland, but Gilbert Farrell and his authority was still in the deck. Burnett thrust the bills into his pocket, went topside and ducked into the galley. He cut himself a hurried, tasteless supper, washed down with steaming coffee, and rejoined Jonsson at the rail.

"I've got to go ashore again, Nils," he said. "Something has come up. I don't know when I'll be through. And, look, I saw Ben Parker and a mean-looking bunch down below the hotel. I—"

Nils glanced at the mast-tips. "Fog coming in. Think he might try to board us again tonight?"

"He might," Burnett said. "Until I've seen Farrell I don't know how much official weight Whit Maitland drags. If he had enough to have the Navy back him up, he might arrange for that note of mine to run out before I ever got back on the *Nootka*."

"Look here, Jay," Nils said, "you and me are honest men, eh? Now, when we turn a good ship over to a new owner on a just debt, we don't hold nothing back. When we left Star Inlet after hearing the States was buying this blasted country, we hauled our hook up so fast we left our best dory on the beach in front of your post. It ought to be fetched. And the rigging would blow out of the *Nootka* before she could run up to the Inlet and back down before late tomorrow —maybe just a little after the deadline on that note."

Burnett grinned and gripped his mate's hand. "Whistle the *bidarka* back for me, Nils."

Jonsson thrust two fingers into his mouth and cut loose with a blast which would have blown the flute from a steamer's whistle. The Aleut canoe, nearly inshore, wallowed in the trough of a swell, came about, and headed back toward the ship. Nils looked critically at his skipper.

"Jay, there's a bottle in the back corner of cooky's cupboard. You look like a snifter might tighten your seams and set you a notch or two closer to the wind."

It was a welcome suggestion. Burnett ducked back into the galley. He found the bottle and was grateful for the light, warming shock of the drink. He poured another and thought about Ben Parker. Then he went back to the main cabin, removed a pistol from the center drawer of his desk and thrust it into the waistband of his pants. When he returned to the deck, Jonsson had disappeared and muffled voices sounded from the forecastle.

Burnett grinned again and swung over the rail as the *bidarka* came alongside. Jonsson was a direct man. He had no stomach for delay. He was already turning out the crew.

CHAPTER FIVE

ASHORE, Burnett slipped another coin to the Aleut canoeman and started briskly up from the waterfront toward the dimmed lights in the lobby of the St. Petersberg Hotel. He was fully aware that he might have to meet the Dunnevan girl's bluff; that whatever brief he might hold for the plight of the small trappers in the event of an unrestricted hunt such as both Sharon Dunnevan and Maitland planned, there was a blunt possibility he'd have to deal with the girl. The actual possession of the money necessary to clear the *Nootka* gave him little choice. But there was still Farrell. . . .

He did not see Ben Parker and the group with him until they had stepped from shadows full onto the walk in front of him. He realized instantly that they had been waiting for him. He halted abruptly, one hand dropping to the butt of the gun under his belt.

"Burnett?" Parker sang out as he halted.

"Yes."

"I want to talk to you, Jay," Parker said.

Burnett swung a little to one side. He felt the way he had in his first naval engagement when a large bore round shot had come over at boom-height above his head. Here was something you couldn't stop. You just tried to keep out of its way. He steadied down.

"Save it for daylight, Ben!" he snapped.

Parker murmured something. His men shoved forward. Details were difficult to establish. Burnett knew that the faint light of the water at his back put him in silhouette.

"Easy, Ben!" he warned.

At the same time, he drew smoothly and fired his gun. He held this first shot purposely wide, hoping to batter splinters from a near wall for more noise and a heightened effect. However, he could not watch his whole target in the gloom. A man on the fringe of the knot moved abruptly. A belaying pin or something equally solid struck him on the shoulder.

The blow hurt. A nerve went dead. Control ran out of Burnett's arm. The gun spilled from his fingers onto the planking of the walk. The pack came against him. He was carried down. He fought savagely for an instant, saw its uselessness, and went slack. He was jerked to his feet and dragged between buildings.

A door was opened and he was thrust into a huge shed, the cavernous darkness of which was driven back only a little by a lantern on an up-ended packing case. Parker's seamen clung carefully to Burnett. Parker shrugged out of his heavy jacket.

"Jay," Parker grunted, "write this off for the ducking you gave me. Nothing personal."

Burnett nodded.

Parker stepped up within a yard of him. "You roughed the boss tonight. And left his girl sobbing her heart out—"

"What heart?" Burnett snapped.

"You'd know better'n me," Parker said with a shrug. "Maybe you're right, at that. But that's only the beginning. You was at Politof's. There's another girl there. Who is she?"

"Ask Politof."

"I told the boss questions wouldn't do. That girl sent something out to you aboard the *Nootka*, anyways. Reckon we'll find out about that, too. But mostly, it's that you didn't take orders when the boss gave them. Jay, I've got to do a piece of work on you—"

"And it makes you sick, eh, Ben?" Burnett asked harshly.

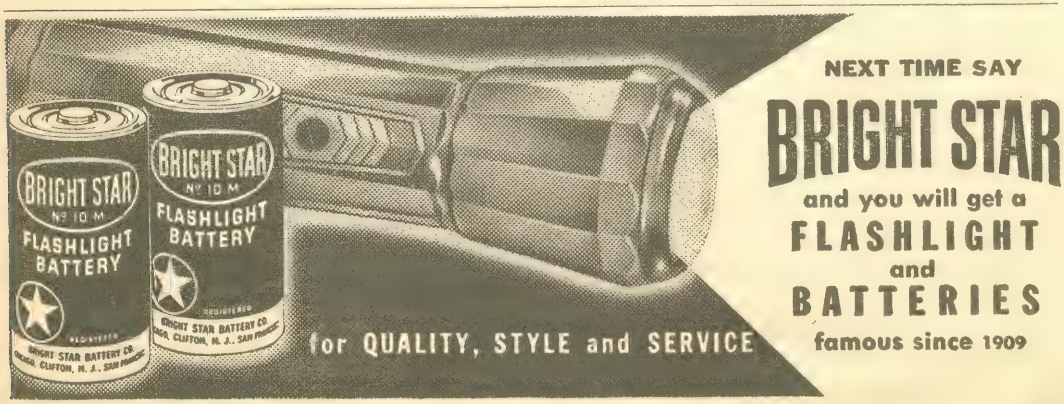
Parker grinned slowly, and shook his heavy head. "Why, no," he murmured. "It don't seem to. It don't seem to at all."

The men holding Burnett's arms jerked him forward. At the same time, Parker struck. Muscles deep in Burnett's belly contracted with shock. His knees loosened and he would have gone down but for the hold on his arms. His lungs reached hard for air and when it came it carried the sick taste of blood into his throat, choking him. He retched and spat.

Those holding him jerked him erect again, and Parker repeated the blow. The warehouse rocked to thundering sound; the lamp wavered and receded. Parker worked with a hard lack of conscience and a brutal competence which was not without its measure of enjoyment. The first shock diminished. A dull nervelessness set in, but Burnett knew it would not last. He was in for hours of agony. This beating was being administered for that single purpose.

Once Parker paused, sweating in the lamplight and waiting for Burnett to be straightened again. Burnett heard his voice coming in on ragged waves.

"He won't last much longer. Trebby, get up to the Double Eagles and turn out the rest of the boys. We want to be aboard that hooker of his and have things all quiet before the



sun comes up and the Navy can put glasses on us."

Burnett was not aware when it ended.

RETURNING consciousness was a bitterly painful awakening. The fog into which Jay had sunk drifted inexorably away, leaving senses and perceptions raggedly alive and in clear, sharp focus. His face was a thickly swollen mask of nagging hurt. His lower chest and abdomen were knotted with twisted, upraised ridges of battered muscle. Blood ruptured deep beneath the skin had spread dark patches of ugly color. The door of the warehouse had been left open and night chill had set a tight cramping into his whole body.

Dragging himself carefully to his feet, he reached first into his jacket pocket. The lining hung outward—empty. He swore. He had been too slow, too careless. Whit Maitland had called the Dunnevan girl's bluff. The sheaf of currency she had sent so boldly out to the *Nootka* was gone.

Unsteady, but with a bitter, prideful effort which straightened him a little more with every step, Burnett went out into the thin morning sunlight. It was too early for traffic. The only stir was among some workmen up toward the foot of Baranof Hill who were stringing banners and bunting from gable to gable across the street. It required a conscious effort in Burnett to drive his mind to an acceptance of the passage of time. This was morning and it marked the last run of sand in his glass—and in Alaska's. At three this afternoon there'd be a new flag on the Hill.

Under the prodding of his pride, Burnett avoided the certain comforts of the St. Petersberg and turned into a side street where there was a cheap bedding hall which advertised a bath. The clerk in the place paled but asked no questions when he reeled in the door. The clerk knew of an old doctor in the next building and sent for him.

Burnett sat steeping in a scummy tin tub of hot water, doubled uncomfortably, while the old man worked. It was a fresh hell. The doctor had strong compounds for cautery, a thorough way of using them, and his hands were unsteady with his gut and curved needle.

It was more than an hour before he finished and helped Burnett out of the tub. He seemed to take a bright pride in the stitching with which he had closed two severe cuts over one cheek bone. He kept looking at them and chuckling with self admiration. Burnett dried himself awkwardly and dressed.

The doctor washed his hands in the bath water and borrowed Burnett's stringy towel.

"If this was a woman this was over, *m'sieu*, it wasn't worth it," he offered philosophically.

"How much can I do?" Burnett asked bluntly. "How much am I crippled?"

The doctor looked surprised. "You ask me that?" he countered. "Man, that isn't my body. Ask your own bones. They'll tell you. Nothing's broken, near as I can tell. But you're bent considerably. What can you do? Depends on how much sand you've got, I'd say. Let's see—you're the ship-master that's been up here six or eight months from the States, aren't you? Well, that'll be a dollar American for getting up and a dollar American for breakfast."

Burnett paid him and moved slowly back onto the street. He drew glances, but continued motion was easing his stiffness and making a bearable compromise of pain. He had restored some order to his clothing, but the doctor had had no bandages. The stitched cuts were open evidence of violence.

Burnett was startled to discover that he was hungry. He swung up the street toward a little restaurant beyond the St. Petersberg.

Across from the hotel was a rise of ground. Burnett paused here to look out over the harbor—something he had not let himself do thus far. There was a great deal of activity on all the ships in the anchorage. This fresh sign of celebration chafed Burnett. Was the rape of a once orderly and prosperous colony such a gay thing?

His eyes focused on a point inshore of the pennanted naval squadron. A mooring buoy lay there, trailing a severed hawser. He grinned, oblivious to a fresh cracking of his lips. The night had not all gone Ben Parker's way. The *Nootka* was gone.

Breakfast, he decided abruptly, could wait until he'd seen Gilbert Farrell.

CHAPTER SIX

A GROUP of Army officers in full dress were quitting the St. Petersberg as Burnett entered. They stared. Burnett brushed on past and crossed the lobby to the slate on the far wall. Farrell's name was freshly chalked up on this Alaskan version of a register. Noting the room number, Burnett stepped into a rear hall and went up the back stairs.

The Treasury man was an interminable time answering the knock on his door. Burnett felt the strong pressuring of speculation. So much depended on Farrell's cut, the general run of his nature. When the door opened, Burnett was neither elated nor disappointed. Farrell was a medium man—studiedly so, Burnett thought—and hard to read. On the surface he was a man who might be satisfac-

tory in his quasi-diplomatic position in the colony. He was impeccably dressed and younger than Burnett had thought he would be. His face showed certain signs of strain. He stood in the doorway without invitation in his manner.

"Yes?"

"Captain Burnett, Mr. Farrell. I've been trying to get to you since late yesterday."

"Burnett? Yes, the *maitre* here told me you had called. And I believe your name was mentioned by a deputation which came to me late yesterday. Your business is important, Captain?"

"Very."

Farrell stepped aside then, and Burnett entered. A coffee urn was on a table in the sitting room. Farrell indicated a chair and brought two cups from a stand in one corner. He studied Burnett across the room and back. As he lifted the urn his curiosity focused.

"You don't look in shape to be abroad before breakfast. What happened to you, man?"

"I came back to the hotel along the wrong side of the street, last night—or I'd have been waiting here for you when you came back from the Agency."

Farrell's brows raised. He asked no further explanation. His manner was brief and he was plainly unwilling to spare much time. Burnett leaned forward. Directly, with no preface and no attempt to mask the urgency of his argument, he made a flat statement of Whitman Maitland's over-all plan on action in the Aleutians. Farrell listened, his face betraying no reaction.

When Burnett had finished, he spoke carefully. "Serious charges, Captain! Mr. Maitland is well regarded in Washington. That was—ah—called to my attention before I left there. You embarrass me. This is hardly the sort of thing a man newly assigned to duty cares to include in his first reports. Possibly after commission of the act. Not before. And where is the violation in Mr. Maitland's manner of hunting? I'll concede malice, but not illegality. A law must exist before it can be broken."

"Murder would be legal up here too, then, looking at it that way!" Burnett snapped. "To hell with your reports, Mr. Farrell, and violations and talk of laws. This is as wrong as Maitland can make it. I'm warning you of something it's your duty to prevent!"

Farrell shook his head. "No, Captain. Not duty. My orders are the work of an ambiguous genius. They specify no duty. I am ordered to set up an office here in Sitka, to serve as a representative of the Treasury Department, to declare Sitka the only port in the territory at which report and entry can be made or goods disembarked. I'm ordered to

"Nope—guess again, Warden."

do nothing else. And my orders are confining. Like the officers of the naval ships in the harbor, my hands are tied. Those ships were ordered up here as transportation for General Rousseau and his party, north and then south again as escorts for the official session delegation. Nothing short of treason or insurrection could keep them from sailing for the States with the general when he's ready to leave in a day or so."

Jay flung down an angry oath. Farrell winced a little.

"It's not that I'm out of sympathy, Burnett," he said. "I've just returned from a difficult session at the Agency. I tried to persuade the chief agent that the stock of Russian goods and ships should be sold to a large number of buyers—possibly at auction, as he originally intended. I was refused, however. My thought that a scattered sale would prevent any large-scale operations in the islands until patrols and regulations could be established carried little weight. The agent freely admitted that he had concluded arrangements to sell Mr. Maitland the company inventory at a satisfactory figure—around a hundred and fifty thousand dollars, I gathered."

"Maitland's money has turned tricks before," Burnett growled. "I suppose turning it at the Agency is not surprising. Even a Russian prince probably has a price if the bid goes high enough!"

"You make a mistake there, Burnett!" Farrell cut in stiffly. "A local man, you should know these Russians better than that. The chief agent in particular. His position is sound enough in this. His government has sold the

land comprising this colony. To realize any profit for his stockholders at home, he is forced to take the best bid. And the whole inventory in a lump would naturally bring more than any itemized auction."

Farrell paused, then went on, "I spoke of a deputation, Burnett, a persuasive gathering of the men whom I suppose really are at the roots, here. Russian and Indian trappers and hunters; one or two of our own nationals, too. They had a plan, a way to establish immediate American supervision of the fur islands. Then Politof, a Russian trader you must know, stopped me on the street with the same thought. I was frankly impressed, at first. But a curious thing occurred. This Politof's wife was at the Agency. She contrived a few minutes with me and she was very outspoken. She claims this plan—advanced by her husband and involving you—was an open attempt to lead me into something which would discredit me with the home government. Just how do you argue the thing?"

"You'll go home in disgrace eventually if you listen to Marya Politof," Burnett said flatly. "This thing is a chance for you to make yourself a real name in Washington by handling a bad situation on the spot and smoothly. Maitland can't have bought all of Capitol Hill. He has me nearly tied up, but there's a little slack if you'll move fast. My ship was a privateer in the war. You probably know that. Her guns are still in mount. She's fast—ideal for patrol. I know her and I know these waters. I can clear for sea, fully found, for seventy-five hundred dollars. You can put the *Nootka* out into the Horn for that figure—a quarter of what it costs your department to commission and outfit a cutter for coastal work in the States."

Gilbert Farrell turned his coffee cup around on its saucer, very carefully. Finally he looked up.

"Madame Politof told me you would bring money into it first. Burnett, this wouldn't be a case where a small competitor, frozen out by a bigger opponent, has his friends working for him on a stranger? It isn't a case of trying to drag the government into a private quarrel—at a nice profit to yourself?"

Burnett leaned ominously across the table, aware that he made a threatening figure in his present condition. "No, Farrell, it isn't!" he said savagely. "So far—with me—it's been a case of believing a hunk of opportunity bought blind by the States should belong to the States and not to one man. It's been a case of hoping that the man our government sent in here would be able to see what Washington has ignored—that he'd have sense enough to see his duties and guts enough to stand by his responsibilities, orders or no orders!"

Burnett straightened and picked up his hat. "That's done. I'm backed into a corner. But I'll come out. If piracy in the Horn is legal, then I've got as much right to it as Whit Maitland. You've knocked the last hoop off a nice little keg of powder. It'll be war, from now on, Farrell. You'd better stay out of the way!"

(To be concluded next month)

ARE YOU DOLLAR WISE?

A sound supply of slang in speaking of U. S. specie will send your stock soaring on this test involving the coin of the realm. Each of the terms refer specifically to coin or currency in use today in the United States. Ten is average; twelve is good. Get them all right and you can coin your own phrase! The correct answers are printed below, upside-down.

1. Two bits
2. Sawbuck
3. Two-case note
4. Century
5. Clam
6. Fin
7. Fish
8. Fish scale
9. Iron man
10. Five yards
11. Jitney
12. G-note
13. Simoleon
14. Wagon wheel

(1) Twenty-five cents; (2) ten dollars; (3) two dollars; (4) hundred dollars; (5) one dollar; (6) five dollars; (7) one dollar; (8) five cents; (9) one dollar; (10) five thousand dollars; (11) five cents; (12) one thousand dollars; (13) one dollar; (14) one dollar.

by Bill Wernicke

Football—Commando Style (Continued from page 57)

in which veterans are providing the backbone and freshmen the nerve power. Illinois is apparently buttressed in every position.

Out on the Coast, Southern California has picked up a host of Navy trainees with grid experience at other colleges. If there's another Rose Bowl game, I look for the Trojans to repeat. Duke should emerge this month as the top eleven of the Southland.

As for the Southwest, here's a communication from Dutch Meyer, coach at Texas Christian University: "I've got a better team than last year. I don't mean we're certain to win the Conference crown again, because from what I've seen, the other teams are improved, too. Southwest quality rose noticeably last fall, and I believe it will climb higher in the closing weeks of the '45 season."

From early-season games, it's apparent that Penn and Yale, who are not scheduled to clash, will reign as co-champions of the Ivy League. The Elis are bulwarked by seven hold-overs, and Penn's line has already proved sturdy. Least but not certainly lost is Columbia. We've had hectic sessions at Baker Field. I've had plenty of time to study the grand old Lion of Morningside Heights and to determine whether he's a toothless tabby or his old roaring self. My real difficulty lies in recognizing the old boy. He changes from week to week.

No, we have no Rose Bowl visions as in '34, nor even Ivy League pennant hopes. Hundreds of Navy V-12's have passed through the Broadway gates—but not one has had previous college football experience!

I recall when crackerjack Johnny Lujack of Notre Dame arrived at Columbia . . . and Penn's pride, Bert Stiff; and U.S.C.'s touted Howie Callanan, and many another star. I watched them wistfully as they roamed the campus. I could never garb them in the Blue and White moleskins of Columbia, for they belonged to the Navy's V-7 program and were ineligible for undergraduate athletics.

So we've had to depend mainly on freshmen. This year we have Gene Rossides, all-scholastic star who smashed Sid Luckman's records at Brooklyn's Erasmus High; and Jack Nork, from Seton Hall Prep. But even a wartime football team cannot hope to excel with a preponderance of freshmen.

Happily, two of the best assistant coaches in the land are drilling our game, green kids in the subtler maneuvers of the college game. Tad Wieman is on leave from Princeton, working on the Army's athletic program. Sp/3C Aldo (Buff) Donelli, former head coach at Duquesne and more recently with two clubs of the National Professional Football League, is a member of the Columbia V-12 unit.

As for our style of play, I've been tinkering with variations of the T, such as the split T, which calls for a wider spaced line to compensate for lack of weight. But I'm not jumping feet first into the T-party yet. As a matter of record, I have always favored the single wing formation. In my book, the single wing provides better passing facilities than the T and also develops more power at one spot.

But it's the material that makes the team, not the formation. Whatever system a coach uses, he's got to have the "hosses" to make it run. Perhaps I'll find some real horses among the discharged G.I.'s who are drifting back to the campus—if not now, next year!

You take it from here—

by Bob Considine

THE best baseball pitcher who ever lived—Walter Johnson, of course—was also the most modest. Back in the days when he was being exploited as few athletes before or since, he pitched an entire series against the Yankees. Walter, as you will remember, slaved for eighth-rate Washington ball clubs for years.

In the Yankee series he pitched Friday, Saturday and Monday. There were no Sunday games in New York at that time. He won each game by a shutout!

The Washington team left New York for Boston after the Monday game. On Tuesday the Washington manager had the unmitigated gall to ask Johnson to go in and relieve a wobbly Washington pitcher.

"But I put my foot down," the quiet-mannered man told us not long ago. "Wouldn't pitch another ball until Wednesday."

"The housing situation is getting terrible. Not a deserted house anywhere!"

Thunder Underfoot (Continued from page 64)

last he was able to pull himself up and stagger to the cabin.

Leaning against the doorjamb, he thought how funny Thor looked, with the saplings still tied to him.

Einar went to the water bucket, drank deeply and stumbled to the outside of the house, where his pallet lay, overlooking the field. He threw himself down, but the perpetual light, the blistering sun, drove him into a frenzy. Between waves of nausea, he finally dragged his pallet back into the house, closed the doors and windows, and lay between unconsciousness and intense physical sickness, in a twilight of discomfort.

It seemed to him that his head was growing, growing, until it almost filled the small room. Then the room itself would expand to the size of a church, and his head would grow with it. Then he would think he was inside the church at North Fiord. Gina would be sitting there, with a scarf over her blond braids.

"Einar, Einar, no, you mustn't!" she would say. Her lips would move, but it was a vibration rather than a sound which would come from them. Then he was red with shame, lest he might vomit in church, in front of her family, and they would say that their daughter could not marry Einar, a man who vomited in church. He forced himself not to vomit, until he could hold it no longer, and then he'd open his eyes and find himself in his lonely cabin, and be sick again and feel better and say to himself, "Thank God, I'm here alone, and Gina doesn't have to see me, and be ashamed of me!"

After a few moments he would lie back, drenched in the sweat of illness, with poison battling his body, and the delirium would begin to creep over him again.

Once as he lay there, he heard thunder in the distance, and the fine falling of rain on his sod roof. He smiled and said to himself, "God is watering my crop for me." He crawled to the window, and saw there was a summer storm gathering, with lightning and thunder in the tall Blue Mountain foothills which hid the horizon.

He drank the last water in the bucket, and his mouth became dry and his lips cracked with fever. So, weak as he was, he set out a few pans in the rainstorm, and fell back onto his bed, exhausted.

He lost track of time. No sunlight or darkness to change the hours of the day; no more oil left to burn down those hours, one by one, in the little stone jar; no sound to break the monotony which became a limbo in which life was suspended.

He must get up and mark his calendar. He must find strength to get food and water, or he would die, and no one would know

until Hjalmar and his wife would return after their summer trip, with their sled full of supplies. They would walk into his cabin and find him dead on his cot—his hobbled animals dead in his fields, perhaps frozen by the first blizzard.

What would they do, he wondered. Would they wait until the next spring, and then tell Gina? More likely they would rifle his supplies, take the sugar and coffee and flour and his gun and blankets, and never tell anyone, for fear their theft might be known. So Gina would never know—at least, until his friend Bjorn came through again, and found his carcass there.

"That I would like more, if it has to be," he thought. "I want a friend to find me. I don't want those bastards to take my things." The idea angered him, and he leaned up on his elbows. His mouth was so dry that it was painful even to think of moving his lips. Perhaps by now the pans would have a bit of water in them.

He followed the wall of the cabin, supporting himself by putting his fingers in the chinks, and worked his way to the door. The pails were overflowing.

He drank slowly, savoring the freshness that poured down his throat. And he sat in the chair a moment, to see if he would vomit. He didn't; he was better.

He drank more water after a time, and lit a fire in the stove. He put cornmeal and water in a pot, and stirred it. After it had boiled to a gruel, he ate some, slowly, but it didn't stay down long.

"More luck next time," he thought. In a few hours he would try again. By God, he *had* to get well!

He crept back to bed, and lay there again, sweating. Then he heard a sound which seemed to fill the room. It was a gnawing, gnawing, gnawing.

The sound disturbed him at first. Then, suddenly, it seemed friendly. Some other creature besides himself was sharing his hut in this vast loneliness. Some little animal had come in from the trackless space of the forest and tundra and was living here with him.

He turned his head in the direction of the sound and saw a small gray mouse scurrying about, trying to chew its way into the dry-goods box, by the side of the stove, where Einar had left a rind of bacon and his tin box of flour.

The little creature sat up on its back feet, and tried to stick its sharp nose into the crack. It couldn't do much, and started to nibble again. Its determination impressed Einar.

"Don't worry, mouse," he said. "I'll feed you."

He pulled himself up, and went back to the stove. He put a blob of gruel on a dish, with some sugar, and set it down on the floor. Of course, the mouse was gone, but it might come back.

"It doesn't look so bad, mouse," he said, and prepared some for himself. He ate and went back to his couch. He slept, and kept the food on his stomach.

He awoke hours later, with a start. His crop, his beets—they must be watered. The open door showed him that the storm had passed and he knew that it would be hot.

He lay, weak, a moment, then got up and walked to the door. He was shaky and thin, yet he felt the poison was out of his system, and knew that he would get well.

Poor Thor stood off beyond the field, with the saplings still tied to his twisted harness. As Einar neared him, the animal curled up his lip, and gave him the quivering look of hunger.

Einar smiled. "Sorry, old boy!" he said, unhitching him. "Now, graze!"

Einar walked to the edge of his field. The green leaves lay limp on the damp earth, but alive.

As he walked back to the hut, he remembered the little mouse. I'll make friends with it, he thought, as he went indoors.

IV

IT TOOK two weeks to build the fence about the field. Einar had to keep watering the baked furrows. He split the green pine trees into lengths which he fixed in a zigzag pattern without nails or wire.

He stopped marking his calendar, for he knew that when the sun swung around to the Blue Mountains, he would be nearing the end of the summer. He figured that his illness might have cut four or five days from his schedule.

Before he slept each day, he tried to tame the mouse. It was slow at first, but finally it would eat from his hand, and sat by his foot, washing its face and head with its paws, in full content and intimacy.

The beet tops grew thick as cabbages, and the red-veined leaves were larger than any beet leaves Einar had ever seen. He hoped the roots were keeping pace with the tops, and one day he was so curious that he spaded down into the earth and for two feet lay open the long purplish-red body of the vegetable, without reaching the end of its root. He covered it carefully and sat looking at his field, and thinking of how little he knew about the plants on which he was spending his life.

What if, after all, the reindeer wouldn't eat

his beets? Would they have enough nourishment to last out the winter? Would there be enough beets, anyway? As he looked over the field, he knew there'd be more than enough, even for a cow.

He went into the barn and cleaned out his stables, bringing in fresh tundra grass for his reindeer. Soon the wispy grass would be gone, and the lichen had already dried. It would be the last stock for his animals until the beets were grown and stacked away in the new bin he was building for them, high off the floor, so that mildew would not attack them as they dehydrated.

He set out traps for ptarmigan and caught two fat ones for his evening meal. After supper, he turned the picture of Gina toward the light.

His longing for her increased as he looked at her smiling face. He wondered if Bjorn's word had reached her. Perhaps she would think he wasn't eager to be with her, or perhaps she had found someone else. Her house was full of friends; many men must want her. Would she understand why he wasn't there? Would she know how he felt, and would she wait for him, without any news of him, or reason to make her wait?

Einar suddenly felt that he was an utter fool. He had sat down complacently to grow his beets, expecting the prettiest girl at North Fiord to wait for him. He was burning to be with her, to have his arms about her, to kiss her. Yet, for a crazy scheme, he had kept her waiting, wondering, doubting. It would serve him right if she gave him up.

He filled his pipe with a last smattering of tobacco and took a pine match out of the tin box. He struck it with his thumbnail, and as it flared up, he saw the mouse, which had been on the floor near his feet, rush off in panic from the flame.

Einar sucked at his pipe and pushed back his chair. He looked out at his field, at the robust beets growing so well. He hated them; hated the damned things which had changed his life, which had kept him from going to the town to see Gina, even if he couldn't have married her this year.

He walked out into the field and stood looking at the plants. How could a seed-gardener in California, in the United States, know what would happen to a beet grown in the north of Norway? How could they know that it would have the same food value? Yes, they were big and plentiful, but perhaps only pulp, as worthless as a dead log for animal food. They had a different sun and soil and even different water in California.

Perhaps he should split his pelts up into four packs, load his reindeer, and make the long trek on foot to North Fiord. Devil take the beets; they could rot in the ground. He'd get to Gina, sell what furs he could in a market that was, by now, surfeited, and beg her to forget his foolishness and wait for him.

AS HE fell asleep, confused, lonely, he thought of Gina's yellow hair, wondered if it would ever rest here in this room, on his pillow, or if it would only be a torturing dream to remind him of his folly. He remembered all the things Bjorn had told him, about his being a fool. It had seemed so logical at the time; that packet of seeds had seemed the solution of everything. Well, one thing was certain; he would leave the next day, and start out on the long trip to North Fiord. If he did, it would be the first time he made it over earth. There had always been snow before.

He awoke after a few hours, and in the stillness wondered where the mouse was. He made coffee with the last of his cannister. It would be at least twenty days more, as near as he could figure, before the beets would ripen. If he were staying, he would be down to bedrock by then. . . .

"Mouse, mouse!" he whispered. The creature had learned to come out for food when he called it, but it didn't answer today. The sudden flame of his match must really have frightened it.

He went outside to take one long look at his field. The plants were bursting with growth and sap. He leaned against the rail fence and whistled for Thor, who was hobbled nearby. He unfastened the hobbles on the other three reindeer, and took them all to the barn. He pushed them inside, for a last feeding before they left; they might as well clean up the scraps.

Back in the house he gathered up his gear. He folded the blankets and put them in the canvas rucksack, and carefully wrapped the picture of Gina in a cloth, tucking it into the sack, firm against the edge.

He swung his pallet over a beam in the ceiling, and put matches and his pipe in a tin box, and laid that, too, on the rafter, with some candle ends and the last of the blubber oil.

The hut looked deserted already. It would be a grim place to come back to alone. It was the hardest thing he had ever done, to leave now. He stood in the doorway a moment, then sat down at the pine table. There was a scant half cup of coffee left. He poured it out, and sipped it.

At first he thought it was his imagination; then it grew definite. It was like the beginning of a headache, a painful vibration, but

it lengthened into sound. Sound so shrill that it was almost too high for the human ear. But it rose, in a crescendo of despair and fright, strange and incredible, because it was so tiny.

He gazed around the room and saw the mouse perched on his haunches, little back curved in a peculiar arch, sharp teeth shining in the open mouth, from which came the unearthly wail.

Einar felt more terrified by this sound than by any noise he had ever heard. For here was a note of doom and utter desperate fear.

"What's wrong, mouse?" cried Einar. But the glazed look in the animal's eyes, its hypnotic fear, gave him no response. Suddenly the creature began rushing madly about the room, dashed halfway up the wall in a frenzy of madness, then fell almost senseless to the floor.

Einar tried to pick him up, but the mouse bit his thumb with such savage fury that he dropped him quickly. "Now," thought Einar, "if he's mad and infected, I'll catch it."

He washed the deep, sharp bite, and looked down to see that the mouse was running again in smaller, more frantic circles.

Then Einar heard a different sound, somewhat like the distant patter of a summer rainstorm approaching along the valley. But there was a droning, too, a high-pitched, ominous buzz that rose harsher and louder. It came from behind the house, as he stood staring.

At first it seemed to be a low cloud of dust, pushed by a roll of gray wave; but as it came nearer Einar picked up his gun and ran out of the door to the side of the house.

A hundred yards away, over the rolling hill they came, millions of them, surging and tumbling, dying, fighting and squirming—the monstrous horde of lemmings, the wandering rodents of Norway, driven blindly forward by some strange biological ecstasy of movement and migration.

Leaving a devastated path in their wake, they rushed toward Einar's house and field. Trembling with excitement and alarm, he fired his gun into their midst, but there was no halt in their advance.

As the roar grew louder, Einar heard a bellow of terror and saw that Baldur and Loki had rushed out of the barn, their great eyes rolling, and were dashing madly off to the pine wood.

Einar dropped his useless gun. The third reindeer, Odin, fled past him as he came to the barn, but Thor was still inside. Einar held him by the halter, and threw the harness traces over him.

"Steady, boy, steady!" he cried. Thor was trembling, head reared back, but Einar held him firm, and fastened the buckle over his neck, and hitched on the sled full of furs. Thor plunged across the field, dragging his clumsy load. Einar gave him a crack with his whip, driving him at a gallop up the rise which led to the pine wood.

"Guess what, honey—I just sold the Brooklyn Bridge for two hundred dollars more than I paid for it!"

"Don't you get tired, rolling in wealth all by yourself?"

By now the lemmings were climbing all over the house; they were a gray-brown moving mass, hiding the sod roof; and Einar heard the crunching noise of hundreds of teeth gnawing the thatch and pine posts. In a few moments everything would be destroyed.

He saw another stream of them flowing through the fences into his beet field. "They won't get that," he thought. "No! They mustn't get that, after what I've been through!"

He rushed into the house, groping for the matches. His feet were deep in a soft squirming carpet of rodents, and he felt their sharp teeth trying to bite through his leather moccasins.

He reached the door, with the creatures crawling up his thighs; two bit him and he kicked, and knocked them off in a sickened fury.

He rushed down the edge of his meadow, struck a match by his stack of tundra grass, snatched up a clout of it like a firebrand, ran to the fence, and fired it. The dry pitchy pine flamed high, as he ran along the fence, lighting it, until the whole field was ringed with a wall of flame and clouds of smoke.

Einar stood in the middle of the field, far away from the edge, and peered through the smoke and flame to see if the lemmings were checked, and he heard them squealing in terror. Would the fire keep them away?

The heat was intense, and he gasped for breath, holding his hands over his mouth, and breathing through his fingers in dry, searing gasps. At last he could see through the rifts of smoke. The wave of animals had passed; only a few stragglers ran swiftly from the embers of his fence.

He waited a few breathless seconds, until the last of them had gone, then kicked over the smoldering fence.

The ground was bare, and the roof of his house had partly caved in, but the fire had diverted the lemmings before they got to the barn. They had fled on down the plain, and he knew they were heading for the river, which they would swim, going onward toward the sea, in their suicidal progress.

He sank to the ground, coughing up the soot and dryness of the fire; but as the charred fence fell down, he saw that the beets were safe, and knew that he would stay to reap his harvest.

V

EINAR reckoned it would take two more weeks for the beets to mature. The lemmings, in their crazed attack, had eaten everything in the house. But he had often made a living for himself in forests and trails, and more than once he had been able to sustain life with little food.

The peak of the summer had passed, and the sunlight seemed to fall less strongly on his head as he worked. The reindeer, all but Thor, had run away, although Einar felt that Baldur was prowling about the forest behind his house. He had found Thor with the sled of pelts wedged between two tree trunks. The reindeer, recovered from his fear of the milling avalanche of live yellow-gray fur, gleaming eyes and squealing rodent mouths, now nibbled the dry tundra grass, and Einar saw that he was losing some of the fat he had gained during the summer.

"Farming is strange and wonderful," thought Einar. "You water the vegetable until your back breaks and the eyes pop out of your head; if you don't give it water it dies. Then, when it is mature, you take it out of the earth, as the booklet said, you lay it out in the sun, and it dries. The very thing that would have ruined it before, now saves it so it will last through the winter, and be nourishing food."

It seemed to him now that the beets were ready to be pulled out. Already he had anxiously watched the southward flight of endless flocks of fowl.

He pulled his first beet. It was more of a struggle than he had expected. He had to

soften the earth with his two-pronged pitchfork, and it took all his strength to pull the great thing from the soil.

The beet lay on the ground, longer than Einar's arm and thick as his body, heavy as a log. He cut into it with his knife, to see what it was like inside, and found a sticky sort of blood in it. He pulled up its neighbor, which was even more stubborn.

After a few hours Einar went to the river. He was drenched in sweat, and his back ached between the shoulder blades; this was a man's work, sure enough. He bathed in the shallow part of the stream. He floated and looked up at the calm blue sky. A migrating wedge of geese crossed to the south.

He lay on a flat rock to dry, tensing his muscles, knowing he would be very stiff the next day. But he'd go back to his work again, he thought, as he fell asleep, exhausted.

When he awoke it seemed for a moment that it was winter, for a cold wind was blowing across his naked back. He pulled on his trousers and moccasins, wondering how many hours he had slept. He fished a while, and came back with a salmon. One of his beets was gone. Some animal had dragged it away.

He cooked his salmon and ate some, knowing that from now on he must not leave his field until all the beets were pulled up, and dried, and stored carefully away in his barn.

The days that followed were a pattern of work and fatigue, one blending into the other, with only the rows of beets, laid out on the ground, to prove what he had done.

Sometimes he would pull up a whole row, struggling with the earth until he hated it and the bulky, ugly vegetables. When he finished a row, he would trudge back to the house for a drink of water, or food, or would throw himself on his pallet, with his gun beside him, and fall asleep. Sometimes he would lie down right in the field, sleep from exhaustion, and pull himself up again to go on with his work.

He turned the beets so they would not mold on the lower side, though his hillock now seemed dry. He knew that they would be spoiled if frost caught them still in the earth.

God knew how many hours it was after he had begun his toil, that he pulled up his last beet. He was so weary that he slept in the field with his mouth open, snoring with fatigue, until his own noise woke him.

As the beets dried, he chinked every crack in his barn. He refitted the doors with wedges and, splitting his water tins into strips, nailed them against every window edge that might be chewed open. He checked the racks, and built a new one to house all the crop. He laid his first-pulled beets in the racks. All he had to do, according to instructions on the

"He sat up all night with a sick friend and apparently caught what his friend had."

packet, was to chop off chunks of the fodder and feed it to his reindeer. Again he cursed the three who had run away. He was sure that it was Baldur who had stolen his beet. He'd like to kick his fat rump and bring him back into harness. It was going to be hard, getting the pelts to the Lapp village where he could buy new reindeer. The first thirty or forty miles, hauling along with Thor, would take all his strength, and he might have a blizzard to face, before the snow was right for travel.

His last beet was stacked in the barn when the twilight end of summer came, and he felt the first snow on his cheeks. Einar went into the forest; Baldur might come back now, since there was little food to be had. He wandered along the familiar trail of his nearest trappings as the swirling snow began to thicken in the air, then walked back.

He stamped into the cabin, built a fire and got his gear together. He would search no more for Baldur; he and Thor must leave at once. If he had been in North Fiord today, he would be heading the other way, rushing back to the forests and the tundra before the black night of winter set in.

He closed his house; there was little in it to store. It would not be a pretty place for Gina to see; he would need her helping hand to make it into a home. Suddenly the urgency of time overwhelmed him. Hitherto his problem had been the beets, but now he realized the necessity for quick action. He must do in double haste what he had done before against the elements, with few hours left to spare.

For hours the storm was strong, too strong to face. Einar crossed from the house to the barn several times. There was no hay left for Thor, and the animal looked at him with hungry eyes and protruding lower lip.

"Well, here we are," said Einar, chopping up one of the beets with his axe. "If you get a belly-ache, we're ruined." He patted the animal as he put the food in the bin. It looked stringy to him. Thor nuzzled it, took a mouthful and chewed it thoughtfully, more slowly, it seemed, than he swallowed hay. Einar watched him intently, expecting a stare of reproach, but Thor kept his nose in the bin, munching steadily.

Perhaps, because he had been alone so long, Einar was sensitive about Thor. It seemed that this was the only friend he had left in the world. The mouse was gone; the lemmings had probably killed it. Now, if Thor should die, that would be the end of everything. It would prove his beets were a failure, and he'd be a pauper, besides.

In a few hours he brought his blankets, duffel bag, and extra parkas and jackets to the barn. Thor was asleep, but turned his head to the lamplight. He seemed all right.

Einar packed his equipment on the sled and harnessed the reindeer. Yes, he seemed all right, yet the food might be harmless, but without any nutritive value. Suppose it did not give Thor the energy he needed for this long and arduous trip?

The snow was now a scattered flurry in the sky. It was the right moment to go. He led Thor outside, putting an extra harness in the sled for future use. He went back to the barn and carefully closed every window, testing the tin stripping. It was tight and animal-proof. He took three of the biggest beets from the top rack, and slid them under the thongs that held the pelts tight. This was a heavy load, and it was hard to get the sled started. Thor strained and Einar tugged, and finally the runners began to slide through the soft snow.

The man and the reindeer, both hauling, cut across the edge of the tundra, and followed the river down into the forest, southward over snow-drifted fields.

VI

TIME stood still, it seemed, as Einar and Thor pushed through the white waste of snow, following the curved river which led them toward North Fiord.

When the plain was flat or the land sloped downward, Thor could carry the load by himself, and Einar would sit in the sled to rest. For the most part, he was in equal harness with the beast, as they pulled up a chain of hills or a long, narrow, snow-covered ravine. Sometimes he pushed the heavy sled as they forced it up a bank or over a frozen stream.

The paths of a timber wolf or deer often crossed theirs, although they saw no man. But once Einar noted the footprints of a Lapp, toes slightly turned inward, as he hurried along, with the runners of a sled and the light feet of the reindeer ahead of him. The snow was light and Einar followed the trail, half-fascinated by the first sign of a man he had seen in a long time. At the slow pace they were forced to make, there was no chance of catching him.

The second day out, Einar cut across country from the river through a thick forest of pine. It was too cold to stop and rest, and besides, every moment was precious. It would be a long pull through that dark forest to the Lapp village, and he wondered how much quicker it would be to drive boldly across the river instead of following the slow *s* of

its curve through the woods.

Suddenly, the memory of his last trip with his father came back to him. It had been spring; they had set out too late. It was here they had tried the fatal shortcut to beat the thaw.

Now, it was the first freeze of the winter. But the frost must be strong and sharp, because not once in the last ten miles had the runners gone through into a pond or small stream, as they slid across. The cold was already penetrating the folds of his wolfskin parka, and he knew from the silence of the forest and the great masses of ice that clung to the trees that everything was frozen and immobile.

He turned Thor around and they went to the edge of the frozen river. Before him lay a sweep of smooth snow as flat as a lake, which could be crossed in one-tenth of the time that the hilly country would take, where the sentinel trees stood guard against quick travel. He could save days from his trip if he cut across the great loop of river.

He halted Thor and walked ahead, by himself. It seemed to him that never in his solitude had he been so alone as now. One fatal step and he'd plunge into the splintering ice, vanishing as his father had.

He turned to see that Thor was following him, straining, with the sled. He expected to hear the sound of disaster as he moved forward. A cutting blast swept over the open space, blowing a fine dust of snow crystals into the air in gusts and eddies. Sometimes they whirled and rose like smoke in the wind. But the storm was at his back, and so he and Thor and the sled moved across the river, stepped onto a rocky ledge and into a low growth of pine, which told them their danger was over. As they hurried on, the wind grew stronger until it almost pushed them toward their goal.

At first Einar felt that the wind was a special blessing, like the rain which had saved his crop when he lay sick; but soon it was blowing too hard, buffeting the sled on its runners whenever Thor was able to make a little speed. The heavy vehicle had to be handled like an animal, afraid and balky, in the storm.

The shortcut over the plain took hours, and when Einar came to the second bend of the river he drove across in a rush, hardly thinking of the terrible sound which had been the nightmare memory of his childhood. There would be no breaking of ice, no horror; instead, life and good things lay ahead.

When they reached the shelter of the pines, Thor halted, panting, his bellowing breaths making a cloud in the clear air.

Einar waited until the beast had rested, then chopped a meal from the first beet, which Thor had almost finished on the trip, and fed it to him slowly, eating a piece of raw snow-rabbit himself.

There was no doubt now, he realized, that the beet root was good for Thor. He had made this difficult trip with only the beet for fodder. It must be nourishing, for he was doing better than anyone would have believed, despite the terrific strain.

Well fed, they moved slowly into the forest, and beyond, where the lighted windows of the village began to shine. It was not dark yet, but the Lapps had lit blubber lamps, and

"Rover's a little unorthodox, but he always finds birds."

Einar stopped on the outskirts to speak to the first man he saw.

It was Oklut, his friend, the elder of the village.

The old fellow smiled at him. "Where have you been? We look for you. And then we give you up."

"I grew beets," said Einar. Oklut didn't even know what he was talking about, so he let it pass politely.

"Where can I get reindeer?" asked Einar.

It took the old man ten minutes to lead him to a reindeer stable, and two full hours of bargaining to pick three running-mates for Thor. He bought two of them with gold kronen from his purse, and paid a white fox pelt for the other.

"I am being robbed," he told Oklut, "but I have to get to North Fiord, and back again in a hurry."

The Lapps gave him some jerky, and showed him their embroidered leather work. He chose a pair of small brown moccasins, trimmed in white snow-rabbit fur for Gina, and took them as a trading gift. Oklut laughed.

"Now I know your hurry," he said. "But if you don't rest a few hours you will be too sick to enjoy a woman. Your eyes are deep in your head."

Einar settled himself in a robe near the door of Oklut's stinking house: not too close, for the whole family spat toward the door. But before he had time to worry much about that, he fell asleep.

Ten hours later he was on his way. The Lapps had given their reindeer hay, but he still fed Thor with the beet. It might not be good to change feed, and he was taking no chances. Thor seemed in fine condition and took the lead with the lordly spirit which had always made him Einar's favorite.

IN OTHER times, Einar would have been bursting with joy and anticipation as he sped the last few miles with four sound reindeer, his fine haul of furs and a full stomach. North Fiord was only a swift sure run, even with deep snowdrifts and a sharp cold, for the winter had come early, but now, when Einar approached Gina's house, he felt anxiety and doubt such as he never had before.

He had always planned beforehand what his next step would be. Life in the north gave a man small opportunity save to work hard and follow the simple customs and precepts of his folk. But this year Einar had ventured boldly out on an unknown path. Many would call him a fool or a madman, at least until time would prove whether he had been right. Also, the burning question—had Gina been allowed to wait for him?—was a torment in his mind.

A wild idea occurred to him. Why tell them about the beets? Why give them a chance to mock him? Far better just to find Gina, and run away with her—if she had waited. They could buy a cow on the way. He'd sell his pelts, and the devil could take anyone, save her, who asked him where he'd been, and what he had been doing.

Back in the Blue Mountains there was his barn, piled to the roof with beet root, fodder for cow and reindeer. If he had done it once, he could do it again. That was what he had wanted when he planted the seed. No one else mattered a rap. He didn't grow the beets for her father, Gleb Peters, to gloat over; he had grown them to make their marriage possible. If Gina was pleased, and agreed, the others could go to hell!

He had worked himself into a fury by the time he saw the first lights of North Fiord gleaming in the dusk. A crescent moon glowed on the horizon; it would be good weather for travel.

At the back of the Peters' house, through the kitchen windows, a shaft of light fell upon the snow. Einar checked his reindeer abruptly, wondering what to do, how to bring Gina outdoors, to speak alone with him.

VII

AS EINAR stood in the snow, he saw a shadow at the window, peering out into the dark. Then the back door opened, and Gina came rushing to him. She had thrown a parka on quickly, and as she ran to him, the fur-lined hood fell back, and he saw her smooth blond hair. When they met, she put her face up to his and smiled a blessed endless moment, then put her cheek softly against his.

"Einar! Einar!" she said. "I've been waiting. I can't believe it! I thought of it so much!"

She reached up and touched his cheek with her hand. With a swift movement, he grasped it and slowly kissed the palm while he looked at her. Then he held her hand in his.

"It's too long to tell, Gina, but I think you trust me. I can give you a cow now, and we'll build our new room next spring. We'll have money, too. . . . I want you to come with me. I'll tell you everything on the way."

Gina looked back, apprehensively, toward the kitchen lights.

"That's what I hoped and planned," she said. "I have everything ready. Papa's reading by the stove; I don't think he knows—you see, I came out for wood. I have some things hidden in the barn."

They slipped into the barn and Gina took a bundle from under the hay.

"He'll be furious," she said, "but it can't be helped. Bjorn tried to explain, but papa flew into a rage!"

"Bjorn! Then he came here himself?"

"Of course," said Gina. "What else do you expect your best friend to do?"

She laid her hand on his shoulder, and it was electric. Einar put his arms around her, and kissed her until her soft lips parted, and they clung together in the darkness, living the kiss which had tantalized them a thousand times in their dreams.

Einar broke away at last. "We have to leave, Gina," he said. "We must hurry to the post, sell my pelts, buy groceries, get married, and be on our way."

He could see the flash of Gina's white teeth in the dark, as she laughed. "With you, groceries come before marriage. But you're right."

They skirted the shadows of the barn, and noiselessly started the reindeer.

"If my father looks out and sees the tracks, he'll know someone has been here. But mother will try to hold him," Gina said.

"You have everything worked out!"

"Indeed I have," she replied. "And furthermore, you don't think I'm going to live up there with just this bundle, do you? Wait till you see what I have in a box at the post!"

Einar laughed. "Where am I going to put our cow? That is, if we can find one?"

"Don't worry, Bjorn made a new sled for you, with special leather sides for the cow, so she can't topple out. I'd like to ride back there myself."

"Well, you won't!" said Einar. "You're going to be here with me. And say, what kind of a bear-trap am I stepping into? This all seems to be arranged for me."

"You're right. I had fully decided not to be away from you another year!"

They drew up at the trading post, and Einar told two Lapps, who were lounging in front, to untie his pelts and carry them in. As they came into the heat of the iron pot-bellied stove, Einar brushed the snow from his feet, and pulled his hood back. He looked into Bjorn's happy face.

"I knew you'd get here," said his friend. "Tell me, have I ruined you? How did the seeds work out?"

"Everything is fine. But we haven't time to talk about it now."

Gunnar, the trader, came over and shook his hand. "You're a fool, Einar, but we knew you'd pull through, somehow. You've got a good haul?"

"Best I've ever had," said Einar. "Take a look, fast, because I've got to hurry. Where is the nearest preacher? And where can I buy a cow?"

"It so happens," said Gina, "that the preacher has a cow for sale."

Einar looked at her quizzically. "Things seem to be almost too well figured out around here. A man doesn't have a chance!"

"This is no laughing matter," said Gunnar.

"You haven't seen her father lately, or heard what he says about you. Gina, according to him, was all but bound for a marriage elsewhere."

"We won't discuss that now," snapped Gina. "Bjorn, where's the sled? And, Gunnar, what about the pelts? And groceries, and credit?"

"Double last year's money," said Gunnar, examining the pelts. "And I'm not just being generous. They're prime."

"Wait!" cried Einar. "This white pelt is Gina's."

"You two drive to the preacher's," said Bjorn. "I'll load the new sled with the groceries and all your gear. How about fodder?"

A Lapp was carrying the last of the load into the store. On his arm, he had the long, dried beet root.

"Good God, look at it!" cried Bjorn. "Did you have much trouble?"

"None at all, they grew fine," said Einar. "You can see I don't need fodder. Thor's been living on beet root the whole trip, and we made the first half of it alone, the two of us in the storm. Come on, Gina, let's get along."

"I'll send your money with Bjorn," said Gunnar.

Einar and Gina mounted the sled. Bjorn ran after them. "My God, Einar, do you know what you've done!"

"I've got Gina," said Einar. "And for heaven's sake, Bjorn, bring me more beet seeds in the spring!" He put his arm about Gina's waist, and Bjorn watched her eyes as she gazed into Einar's face. He looked away; it was too personal for someone else to see.

"Good luck, you two maniacs!" he said, as they drove away.

He went back into the trading post and took out his knife, and began to shave a piece off a plug of tobacco.

"This calls for a drink of aquavit," said Gunnar, reaching up to the shelf.

Just then, the door swung open, and Gleb Peters burst in, carrying a rifle.

"Where's that young idiot?" he screamed. "Where did he go with my daughter? I'll shoot him dead!"

Bjorn shook his head slowly.

"I wouldn't shoot my son-in-law if I were you, Mr. Peters," he said. "It looks very much to me as if he'll be a hero when the news gets out that he's opened up the frontier a hundred miles further north!"

THE END

CARNEGIE MEDAL HEROES

by Henry F. Unger

THE plane streaked in toward the shore like a wounded bird. Frantically, pilot Andrew H. Doswell tussled with the controls as the stricken plane headed for the pile-driver. There was a crashing sound and a thousand streaks of light spiralled up. The plane catapulted off the pile driver to the earth, landing on the Uphopee Creek bank.

Apprentice carpenter R. D. Daniel witnessed the crash. He had been standing at the end of the pile-driver, and the impact had bruised his knee.

For a puzzled second, he was stunned. Then he realized that a life was burning away in that smashed plane. A sudden unknown agility pushed the carpenter down the pile-driver ladder. He released his hold on the rungs, dropped the remaining six feet to the ground, then ran toward the plane.

Fellow workers shouted warnings of explosion. But he was now fifteen feet away. For a moment he surveyed the inferno. The plane's nose lay limp three feet above the foot of the steeply sloping bank, while the tail extended beyond the top of the bank. Two gasoline tanks under the cockpit were exuding their contents on the bank, followed quickly by fierce flames, leaping four feet from the fuselage.

Daniel picked up a six-foot timber and proceeded step by step to scale the steep bank. He could see the horrible struggle of the pilot. He crashed the log into the canopy. Unbroken glass met his thrust. Again he rammed the log with no success.

Accidentally, the log slid against the movable section of the canopy, which shot back. The trapped flyer, now semi-conscious, fell out of the cockpit close to Daniel. A strap of his parachute was snagged in the cockpit. Daniel unfastened it. With his arms around the numbed flyer, he helped him away from the now roaring flames.

That day, September 22, 1943, was an eternity of time compacted into fleeting minutes for the flyer and his rescuer. For Mr. Daniel of Tuskegee, Alabama, it brought the Carnegie Hero bronze medal and a $500 award. He was a hero who had offered his life to save another.

But to get stuck for someone else's job is what makes it lousy."

"Quite a point in ethics," Norma said, "but of no immediate help. What we need is a thought. Where did Matty see that knife last?"

And Matty tried to walk back slowly through the past to the point where he had parted company with the knife. He finally shook his head. "No dice. It seems I can't think past yesterday. I don't know what I ever did with the thing."

Fat Lips took over. "So it's a tough spot. In a matter of hours some cop will see those initials and realize they do not stand for 'Merry Christmas.' You have a quarrel with the bum, and two hours later he is found using your knife for a collar button. You are in a bad jam, Mr. C."

"As soon as I saw the knife," Matty said, "I knew I wouldn't be elected mayor this year."

"It won't do you any good to get thrown in the clink. No bail for homicide. You'll be of little use to yourself that way."

"That makes sense," Norma agreed.

"So what you do," Fat Lip went on, "is take a powder. You spirit yourself off someplace until we can remember when and how you and that knife drifted apart."

"Running away like that will tie it right to me," Matty said.

"What more do they need than what they have already? You got knots around you like a Macy's bundle. You take it on the run. It's the only thing to do."

"He's right," Norma said. "Until we can somehow take the cover off this thing, you're much better off out of sight."

Matty shrugged. "I suppose so." He slapped his forehead with the heel of his hand. "If I could only remember just what I did with the thing. I must be getting a little punchy. I quit that business just in time." He looked at them. "So where do I go? Anyone got a good idea? Where do the police not look for a fugitive?"

Fat Lip leaned forward. "I got the perfect place! My Uncle Melvin has a place in Brooklyn. He—"

Botsy shouted him down. "You ain't got no Uncle Melvin! I refuse to believe it. By count, that makes fourteen. No one has fourteen uncles. It's impossible."

Fat Lip ignored him. "Uncle Melvin lives on a barge in Brooklyn. It would make a wonderful hideout. You just go there, then don't stick your nose out until we get in touch with you. Uncle Melvin will take care of your eats and things like that. You'll be as snug as a bug in a rug."

Matty could think of no suitable place himself. He said, "What have I got to lose? Where is Uncle Melvin?"

Fat Lip gave him detailed instructions. "You can't miss it. The barge is painted red."

Matty nodded. "Just the thing. Uncle Melvin couldn't have chosen a more neutral color, could he? I'll feel like a horse in the subway. Very inconspicuous."

"No one will bother you," Fat Lip assured him. "Uncle Melvin hasn't been in trouble for years. No one would ever think of looking for you there."

"Uncle Melvin is a close-mouthed gentleman?"

"Very close-mouthed," Fat Lip said. "The State of Texas would certainly like to know where he is. I think he had a little trouble with a bank."

"He seems like an interesting person."

"You'll like him."

MATTY ate his steak. At least he was committed to some form of action. It was better than merely waiting passively for someone to come up and lay a heavy hand on his shoulder.

Norma said, "I will come to visit you. I will bring cakes and fried chicken and things you will like."

"You go to visit him and there will be fourteen cops about six feet behind you. You must think they are very stupid."

"I will disguise myself. They will never know me."

"I wish you wouldn't be so kind," Matty said. "I'll take my chances with Uncle Melvin. Both of you will be a little too much for me, I'm afraid."

"Love will find a way," Norma insisted.

"Love will land me in the clink. Leave us leave love out of this. This is murder."

"The same thing," Botsy observed.

They finished their meal and made their goodbyes. Fat Lip said, "Just take the subway. You ride a cab and the guy is liable to remember you."

"In the subway," Matty said, "I will feel like a bright red barge in Brooklyn."

Botsy told him, "Don't get discouraged. We will be thinking of what you did with that knife."

Norma was more demonstrative. She walked close, and the perfume she used was heady stuff. She put her arms around Matty's neck, and there was a trace of tears in her voice as she asked, "Aren't you going to kiss

me goodbye? This is no way for lovers to part."

"It might save some trouble," Matty said. He kissed her, a bit abstractedly at first. His abstraction did not last long. Her lips were warm and sweet and more than responsive. Her body apparently had been fashioned for the sole purpose of having Matty put his arms around it. It was quite an experience, and it lasted until Botsy said, "If you're going to Brooklyn tonight, pal. . . ."

Matty stepped away, and he looked at Norma and said, "Well!"

Fat Lip shook his head. "When I think of the months that have been wasted. The Philadelphia branch of the family *always* gets what it goes after. You would have saved yourself so much trouble, Matty, if . . ."

Norma's smile was suddenly a delicious, intimate thing. She said, "I'll come to see you, Matty."

"Even if you bring the cops," Matty heard himself say, "it will be wonderful." In a few moments he found himself out in the street, headed for the subway, trying to shake the clouds out of his head. This was one hell of a time to fall in love.

CHAPTER SIX

HE FOUND the barge. It was tied to an apparently deserted pier in South Brooklyn. The waters of the bay lapped against its hull, and in the light of distant street lamps, Matty could see that it was indeed a gaudy job. Approaching, he discovered that the deck of the barge was piled high with miscellaneous rubble, but the small cabin at one end seemed clean and freshly painted. A light shone in the windows. He climbed aboard, knocked at the door.

A heavy voice called, "Come in! Come in! The door is never locked!"

Matty thought, *That is something we'll have to change.* He walked into a room that was cleanly and tastefully furnished, with gay gingham curtains at the windows. There was the sharp smell of woodsmoke in the air, and only after a few seconds did Matty see the man in the overstuffed chair, off in one corner. The man stood up.

Matty was pleasantly surprised. Uncle Melvin, if this were he, was a shortish man with the kindliest face Matty had ever seen. The eyes were keen and blue, the nose short and flippant. A snow-white mustache contrasted beautifully with the florid face. Matty said, "Are you Uncle Melvin? I mean, are you Melvin Fields?"

"To some I am and to some I am not. To you, my boy, I think I am. How are you?" He extended his hand and his grip was firm and sincere. Matty said, "Your nephew sent me over to see you. Fat Lip."

Uncle Melvin seemed pleased. "How is the lad?" He shook his head. "I always disapproved of calling him 'Edelbert.' A foolish fancy of his mother's. Sounds like some sort of cheese. Haven't seen him in two years."

"He's fine," Matty said. "He seemed to think you wouldn't mind my coming out to see you."

Uncle Melvin snapped his fingers. "Forgetting my manners entirely. Have a drink with me, lad. What will it be?"

"Anything that happens to be convenient," Matty told him.

"Suppose we say a little Scotch? But your choice is not limited."

Matty settled for the Scotch. He could use a drink. Uncle Melvin went into the next room and Matty followed him. It was a kitchen, small but very adequate, and in a large iron stove a fire glowed against the coolness of the evening. The Scotch was obtained from a closet, and Matty noticed that the bottle had many companions.

He thought it time to explain his visit. He said, "My name is Chase. I—"

"Knew you the moment I saw you," Uncle Melvin said. "Watched you fight that Gomez last autumn. A shame you lost. Started a little slow. Saw the fight from the ringside. I was selling programs. See all the big fights that way. Programs or pop."

Matty grinned, then sobered. "Well, Mr. Fields, the truth is that I'm in trouble. It would be very convenient if the police didn't know my whereabouts for a few days. Fat Lip said you wouldn't mind my coming out here."

"Glad to have you, my boy. More than glad. There have been times when I felt your own reluctance to associate with anyone in uniform. Just what is the nature of your embarrassment?"

Matty thought he might as well acquaint the old gentleman with the facts. It was the only fair thing to do. He said, "I am embarrassed by a murder."

Uncle Melvin lifted his eyebrows. "A very embarrassing affair, murder." He drained his glass and chuckled. "But there is one consolation. Always think how much more embarrassed than you is the—shall we say—murderee."

Matty gave him the story, omitting none of the details. He concluded, "It was my knife, I'm sure of that. But I haven't the faintest idea how it got there. The trouble is, I can't remember just when it was that I last saw the

thing. If I could place that, it would be of some help."

Uncle Melvin nodded soberly. "It would that." He was silent for a moment, then looked up, smiling. "Another drink? No use trying to think on one drink. Hard enough on five or six. One, out of the question."

They had the second drink and the third. The Scotch was excellent. Matty glanced around the room. "Nice place you have here."

"Glad you like it," Uncle Melvin said. "Been here for four years come June. Rather like it myself."

"Who do you work for?" Matty asked.

Uncle Melvin said, "Work for? What do you mean?"

"I mean, who owns the barge?"

Uncle Melvin shrugged. "Blessed if I know, my boy. I just moved on in an—er—awkward moment, and no one has disturbed me since. She wasn't in good shape, then. Badly down by the bow, and leaking. I patched her up, pumped her out, made a few repairs."

Matty said, "That's very unusual."

"And very convenient. It's a nice home. I like the neighborhood, and everyone who has business here at the pier—there aren't many—knows me. I suppose they think *I* own the barge." He was silent for a moment. "As a matter of fact, perhaps I do. Have to look into it. Something about squatter's rights."

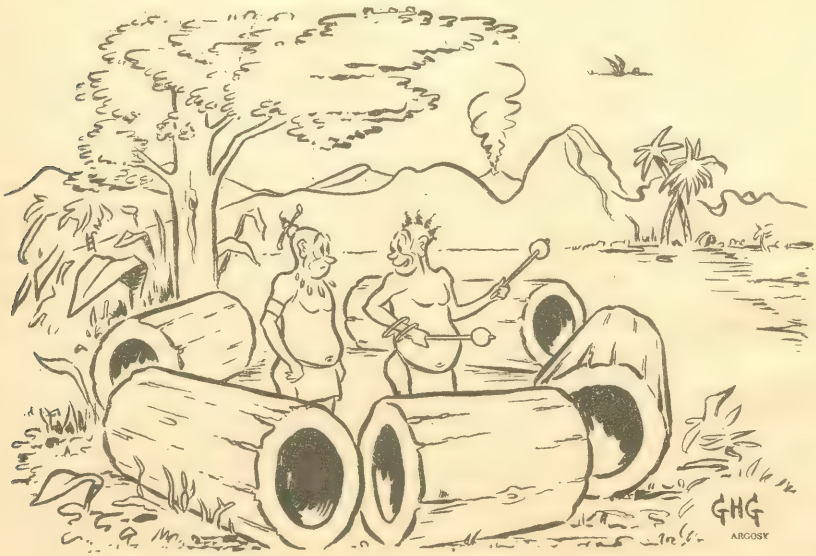
Matty was impolitely curious, but the old gentleman didn't seem to mind when he asked, "What do you do, Mr. Fields?"

"Do? Very little, I'm sure. As little as possible. I'm from the Philadelphia branch of the family, you know, and I'm afraid we're not as industrious as we might be." He settled back with his drink. "I discovered long ago that our lives were so terribly short that we couldn't possibly spend them working. I do what pleases me, Mr. Chase. Labors of love. For instance, I am very fond of baseball. Therefore I sell programs all season for the Dodgers. Fairly remunerative, and I see all the games. I like fights. I am paid to see them in the same fashion. I am very fond of music. If you attend the opera, you might be ushered to your seat by me."

"Very sensible," Matty agreed. He finished his drink. "That's fine Scotch."

Uncle Melvin beamed. "Glad you like it. I consider it good myself. Came to me by a very happy circumstance. A barge loaded with liquor was in collision, just down off the next pier, not quite a year ago. It was in the evening, and before they had divers at work the next morning, I had enough liquor to last me for years. I happen to be an excellent swimmer, Mr. Chase."

"I do not doubt," Matty said, and meant it, "that your virtues are innumerable. I am proud to know Fat Lip, a man who has such an uncle."



"I can now broadcast over five different wave lengths—rosewood, lignum vitae, mangrove, teak and eucalyptus."

Uncle Melvin arose and bowed from the waist. "I appreciate such a compliment from a fighting man." He raised his glass. "Shall we?"

Matty said, "We shall."

He awoke the next morning, and the surroundings were strange. He was on a comfortable cot in a small room. Lying there, he was conscious of some small sense of motion. He thought of the night before and the many Scotches, and attributed it to this. Then he heard the gentle slap of a wave against a wooden hull and remembered where he was. There was a small porthole above his head. A ladder led up one wall of the room.

He looked at his watch. It was eight o'clock. He heard footsteps up overhead, and Uncle Melvin's voice singing cheerily. He climbed the ladder, knocked on the trap-door over his head. Uncle Melvin's voice sang out, "Up you come!" and the trap door opened.

There was the smell of bacon in the kitchen, and Uncle Melvin said, looking at him, "You shouldn't feel too badly. How about a bottle of cold beer before breakfast?"

"It sounds wonderful," Matty said, and it was. While he drank it, Uncle Melvin explained, "That room you slept in. I installed it about a year ago. Carpentry is one of my hobbies. Nicely ventilated, a bit out of the way, and entirely convenient on some occasions. Had quite a time getting you down there."

"I can imagine. But it was very comfortable."

"One floor below you," Uncle Melvin smiled, "is a fine supply of that Scotch. I think it'll last for another year."

Matty said a little glumly, "Even then I will like it."

"The police," the old gentleman said, "are after one Matthew Chase. It seems that his initials were found on a knife. He is believed to have fled the city." He shoved a newspaper across the table at Matty.

IT WAS all there. Matty read some of it, folded the paper and set it aside. He said, "I like Fat Lip's statement. '*Mr. Chase revealed to me no untoward plans.*' I love that guy." There had also been, in the paper, a wonderful picture of Norma. He said, "You have a wonderful niece, Mr. Fields."

Uncle Melvin beamed. "A good picture. Marvelous legs."

Matty said, "Mr. Fields, I am in love with your niece." The words came as a surprise, but he knew they comprised the greatest truth he had ever uttered. It was astonishing and, at this stage of the proceedings, almost lamentable.

Uncle Melvin was pleased. "A commendable thing. We will certainly be glad to have you in the Philadelphia branch of the family."

Matty said, "Thank you," a bit dispiritedly.

Uncle Melvin instructed him, "You will go into that room if anything silly occurs. I don't have many visitors, but we'll be careful. The rug covers the trap very nicely."

The day passed quickly, in spite of the fact that Matty's mind was crowded with worry. They listened to the radio, and there was frequent reference to the Joyce slaying and the nation-wide search for Matty Chase. For some reason, a town called a Little Rainfall, Vermont, was being combed for him.

The spring night came on, and Matty's melancholy deepened. Ordinarily, on a night like this, he would be sitting at the piano, in front of the band, listening to Norma sing. He had never realized how much he enjoyed hearing her sing.

It was fully dark when they heard the knock on the door of the barge shanty. Uncle Melvin whispered, "Into the hold with you, lad," and it was done almost as quickly as he spoke the words. Matty heard him putting the rug back in place, then the murmur of voices in the room above. In a moment the trap opened and Uncle Melvin said, "Matty, a visitor." Matty climbed the short ladder.

He closed the trap and adjusted the rug. He looked up and smiled at the young girl who stood there with Uncle Melvin. He smiled, but only for a moment. Then he almost fell back down into the hold again.

The girl was about thirteen years old. She was a nice enough looking kid. She wore saddle shoes and bobby-socks, a short skirt, and a Sloppy Joe sweater. Her hair was tied in pigtails, and her face was devoid of make-up. Matty said, "Norma!"

The girl pouted. "I never thought you'd recognize me. I am the superintendent's daughter. I came out the back way. I winked at one of the cops and he told me I should be home in bed."

It was nice to hold the superintendent's daughter in his arms, Matty decided. To kiss the superintendent's daughter was even more thrilling than to kiss the vocalist in Matty Chase's band. He finally desisted, and Norma said, "So! You like the young type!"

Matty said, "I like your type."

Uncle Melvin contributed, "You have my blessing."

Matty stood off from Norma and looked at her. He said, "It's wonderful. You look like some kid my brother, that jerk, would go around with."

And then he straightened suddenly and felt the color drain from his face. When he spoke,

it sounded like an echo. "I sent my brother that knife from Italy."

No one spoke for fully a minute, and Uncle Melvin broke the silence. He said quietly, "I think a bit of Scotch would work wonders."

Over the drink Matty repeated. "I remember it clearly, now. I kept the thing for about a month, then wrapped it up and sent it home to the kid. Souvenir, you know."

Norma was no schoolgirl now. She said, "Tell me about your brother. You never have."

Matty looked through the window into the night. "He's twenty. A weak kid. Always in some minor sort of trouble. He shoots a very nice game of pool, I understand, but he won't do anything else. I send him so much a month and it's never enough. He puts the touch on me for another fifty, another hundred. I tried to have him live with me but he didn't like the idea. What the hell can I do with him? I sent him to good schools but they kicked him out. I suppose he's just not too bright."

"You think *he* did this thing?" Norma asked.

Matty shook his head. "He wouldn't have had the nerve."

He got to his feet. "But he will have *something* to tell me. Where he sold that knife, or hocked it."

He looked for his coat and hat. "This would be a good time to speak to him. It is a little too early for him to be going out."

Norma said, "I am going with you."

"If you think," Matty told her, "that I am going four feet without you, any time from now on, you are out of your mind. Of course you're going with me."

He turned to Uncle Melvin. "I can't thank you enough. I have an idea that I will be getting out of this jam, and when I do, you and I are really going to do a job on some Scotch. My Scotch."

Uncle Melvin shook his hand. "I will enjoy that."

They walked up to Third Avenue and got a cab. Matty gave an address in the East Sixties, in New York. "The apartment I got for Mom seven or eight years ago. It's not too far from the old neighborhood, but there's an elevator and the roaches aren't so big."

CHAPTER SEVEN

A CAB, he found out, is a remarkable conveyance in that it takes you where you want to go and also lets you kiss your girl. The cabby looked in the mirror and "Tsk, tsked" in a scandalized manner. Matty grinned and kissed the pig-tailed girl again.

They drove to the street beyond the house. They paid off the cab and Matty said, "The police are probably watching the front of the house. The apartment is on the third floor and there is a fire-escape we will use."

"If I were to tell you what I caught, dear, you'd say it was another fish story!

"If anyone stops us," Norma told him, "I will say I am the superintendent's daughter and we are testing the fire-escape."

They walked through an alley and got to the back yard of the house in which his brother lived. "I will boost you to the fire-escape and follow you," Matty said.

"And when you boost me," Norma said, "be discreet about it. We are not married yet."

They went up the fire-escape like a couple of mice. At the second floor Norma turned and whispered, "Keep your eyes closed going past this floor. There's a blonde in there who is both indecently lovely and indecently undressed."

"I have eyes for no one but you," Matty said.

"Maybe *you* better go first up this ladder."

At the third landing, Matty said, "In here." They stepped into a bedroom, heard a radio in another room. Matty said, "The prince has not yet gone out for the evening."

In the living-room a good-looking boy was reading a newspaper. Matty saw that it was turned to the racing entries. He said, "Hello, John," and the kid almost jumped through the ceiling.

He turned, and then his weakness was revealed in his chin and in his eyes. He said, "Brud! What the hell . . ."

Matty introduced Norma. He sat down and lit a cigarette. "Johnny, when I was in Italy

I sent you a Nazi trench knife. Remember?"

The boy stared at him and paled. Then he shook his head. "You never sent me a knife, Brud. Or if you did, I never got it."

"And," Matty continued, "you wrote to me and said it had arrived and you thanked me for it. One of the few things you've ever thanked me for. Remember?"

John shook his head, but more slowly this time. "No, Matty. I think— That is . . ."

Matty got up, took the kid by the collar, said, "Excuse me, Norma. We have a few things we'd like to talk over." He pulled John with him into the bedroom, closed the door. He said, "Do a little talking. I'm in trouble and I want to be out of it. Tell me things."

Johnny shook his head slowly. "Matty, I don't know a thing. I'm tellin' you, Matty . . ."

Matty took him by the collar and slapped him across the face twice, very hard. He said, "You've never been any good. I should have beaten your ears in a long time ago." He slapped him again. "What did you do with that knife?"

Johnny shook his head. With the next slap, he started to cry. And talk, too.

"I missed it the day after O'Keefe was here. I had it set on a couple of nails on the wall. It looked nice. Then three days ago I missed it."

Matty sat him in a chair. "Willie O'Keefe?" And when the kid nodded, Matty asked, "What have you got to do with him?"

"I owed him some money. A hundred and twenty bucks. He's a six-for-five guy. I borrowed a hundred from him about a week ago. He wanted it back and I didn't have it. That bum of his was with him, Gomez. They roughed me up a little and said they'd be back in a few days. When they were gone I missed the knife."

Matty stared at him, then shook his head. "Why do you fool around with those slobs? Why didn't you call me up?"

The kid shook his head. "I called you the week before. You were sore."

"I sent you the dough, didn't I?"

Johnny nodded. "But you were sore."

Matty got up. "Don't you move from this apartment. I'm going to find Willie O'Keefe." He opened the door and called Norma. She came in and they went to the window again. The room was still darkened. He turned, then, and said to his brother, "And when this is all over, I'm going to fix you as you've never been fixed before. I'm going to get you a job."

As they were going out the window, Norma said, "Goodbye, Johnny," and waved her hand at him. Matty told her, "A mad-woman I'm hooked up with."

They got into the yard, out through the alley by which they had entered. They walked a block and Matty told Norma what he had learned from the kid. "I don't know what it means, but I intend to find out."

"Where will we find Mr. O'Keefe?"

"He must have a home, a rat-hole someplace. He might be there. We will try."

They stopped in a drug store and consulted the telephone directory. O'Keefe lived in a

place called the Wellington Towers on Central Park West. They got a cab and gave the driver the address.

They got into the elevator at the Wellington Towers, and though the operator looked at them curiously, he took them to the eighteenth floor when they asked for Mr. O'Keefe's apartment. Getting out of the elevator, they found the apartment and Matty rang the bell. He told Norma, "If anything silly happens, you hit the floor and roll under the sofa. I don't want you to get hurt."

Norma smiled sweetly, said nothing.

THE door opened, and Matty was only slightly surprised to see Felix Gomez on the inside. He said, "Hello, Gomez. Willie home? We'd like to see him."

Gomez said, "Willie not home." He said it very definitely and there was shock evident in his eyes as he tried to slam the door. Matty had his foot in it. His shoulder shoved and he was inside. He felt Norma right at his back. The door closed behind them and Matty said, "Okay. Where's O'Keefe?"

Gomez shook his head. "Willie not home."

Norma said, "Fix that. The needle's stuck."

Matty looked around the nice apartment. To the right there was a door leading to another room. He walked toward it and Gomez stepped directly in front of him. Matty said, "Mac, don't play with me tonight." He pushed Gomez aside and the man threw a right hand at him. It landed high but it was a hard punch and it hurt.

Matty released all the savagery that the events of the last few days had stored within him. He took out on Gomez all the anger, all the bitterness, all the roaring rage that was the manifestation of the injustice that had been done him. He beat the guy into a corner, hit him with both hands half a dozen times. Gomez broke away, picked up a chair and threw it and missed. That was about all. Matty slugged him against a wall, hit him with fists, elbows, anything that was handy. He didn't stop punching for a full two minutes. When he was through, Gomez was a bloody, unconscious mess on the floor.

Matty said, "He could have saved himself so much trouble. All I wanted to do was look in that other room."

Norma said, "Remind me not to make you angry."

Matty walked toward the other door. He had almost reached it when he heard the hall door open. He turned and there was Willie O'Keefe. O'Keefe stared, then reached in his pocket and pulled out an ugly little gun. He said, "This is lovely. The guy the police are looking for. A murderer. In my apartment."

Matty saw his hand tighten on the gun, knew this was the finish. He also saw Norma, standing unnoticed behind O'Keefe, take a candlestick from a side table and hit O'Keefe over the head. The gun went off, the bullet went into the ceiling, and O'Keefe fell on his face. He was out for the night.

Matty walked to Norma and took her in his arms. She was trembling like the little girl she was dressed as. He said, "You're wonderful, baby. I love you very much."

She raised her face and he kissed her, and she said, "That sort of talk encourages me. I would like to hear more of it." But it was she who finally ended their embrace and said, "We should look around this place. Maybe we'll find something."

They looked. They looked very thoroughly. And in a drawer in a bedroom that was evidently O'Keefe's, they found a packet of letters. Matty sat on the bed and looked through them and in a minute he said, "We are all through looking."

"What have we got?" she asked.

"We have," he said, "several communications from one Wally Joyce to one Willie O'Keefe. Very interesting."

"Love letters?"

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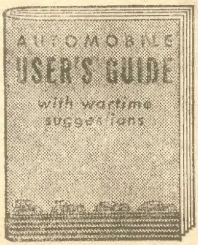

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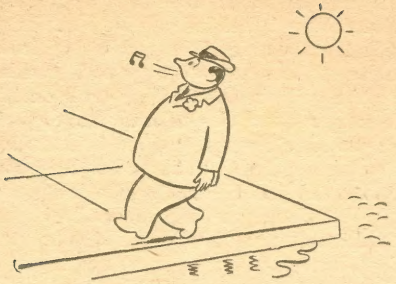

"You have a one-track mind. No, they are not love letters. They tell a story. About how one time, around seven years ago, Wally Joyce spends a year in jail for forging a check. His name was Hubert Zimmer."

"How horrible!"

"So he gets out of the gow, changes his name, and gets into pictures. But Willie, or Mr. O'Keefe, knows about this time Joyce does in stir. He is apparently the only person who knows about it, and it is worth money to him. He bleeds Joyce for plenty. And Joyce pays."

Norma said, "How silly! Why didn't he go to the police?"

"The publicity, you dope. But finally he got fed up. He spent a little money, hired a detective, found that O'Keefe made much more money—through his wonderfully illegal deals—than he paid income tax on. So what does he do?"

"Calls the income tax people?"

Matty shook his head. "Joyce was smarter than that. *He* started to blackmail Willie. He wanted his money back. And he stood a fair chance of getting it, too, if O'Keefe hadn't been as tough as he was. O'Keefe did the only thing he could do. He killed Joyce. He or that stupid Gomez."

"With your knife."

Matty nodded. "He probably wasn't thinking of me particularly when he went up to get his money out of my brother Johnny. But he had Joyce in mind, and he hates me, and it all looked like a good idea. The fact that he skewered the guy the same night I had an argument with him was pure luck."

Norma said, "A fighter, a musician, and a smart guy. I knew it the moment I saw you. And another thing. You are still middleweight champion of the world. You can lick Gomez."

"In a long fight," Matty said.

"In two minutes. What do we do now?"

"We call the police. This will certainly be as evident to them as it is to us. And they will make Willie talk. Willie and that bum of his."

He picked up the phone that rested on a bed table and called the Homicide Bureau. He said, "This is Matty Chase," and grinned at the reply. Then he said, "I am up at Willie O'Keefe's apartment in the Wellington Towers. Come up. I have something that might interest you." He waited a moment, then hung up, and said to Norma, "They said they will hurry. These letters will be very instructive to them, very relaxing for me."

He went out and looked at O'Keefe and Gomez. Gomez was stirring. Matty lifted him to his feet, whacked him solidly, set him down again. He came back to the bedroom. "They are sound asleep, like babes."

Norma was suddenly and wonderfully in his arms, and in a little while she said, "Do you know, I'm very glad you're not going to jail? A honeymoon in a cell would be slightly less than a brilliant thing. I like this much better."

"I like this," Matty said, his arms still around her, "much better than anything that has ever happened to me."

She kissed him again and said, "You're cute. Fat Lip and Uncle Melvin will be pleased. As a matter of fact, the whole Philadelphia branch of the family will be pleased."

Matty said, "That's another thing I meant to ask you. How many branches of this family are there?"

"One," Norma said as the police broke down the door. "The Philadelphia branch."

THE END